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Negotiating positions: a discourse-based exploration of the work of Teaching Assistants in English schools.

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Doctor of Education

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thesis

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Abstract: 'Negotiating positions: a discourse-based exploration of the work of Teaching Assistants in English schools.'

This thesis focuses on Teaching Assistants (TAs) as members of the school workforce 'remodelled' and 'modernised' through the policies such as the 'National Agreement' (DfES, 2003c; ATL *et al.*, 2003). Findings suggest that:

- schools are not monolithic institutions; there is variety and inconsistency between local practices and relations, including within individual schools
- TAs and teachers instrumentalise pupils to labour to produce the 'measurable' outcomes of schools; the three parties operate in asymmetric power relations
- 'place' within schools reinforces asymmetric power relations between TAs and teachers
- the texts that circulate in schools reinforce and undermine the asymmetric power relations
- TAs undertook an increasing number of traditional teacher tasks
- drawing on various aspects of their work and policy, the TAs defined themselves as teachers, other than teachers and more than teachers,
- drawing on the social and material resources circulating in their environments, the TAs ideologised their being and doing.

Adopting a broadly relativist, post-structuralist, and constructivist paradigm, using qualitative methods based on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001; Potter and Wetherell, 1987), this thesis uses the words of the TAs who participated in this project to explore their experiences of working in primary and secondary schools in England. The participants' words come from their participation in focus groups, interviews and from written work they produced as students on a Foundation Degree programme. Ideas from Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 1997; 2005) were used to explore the location of the participants in relation to their workplaces, colleagues and

pupils and to establish the categories for subsequent critical analysis of their discourses, broadly following Fairclough's (2001) stages of 'description, interpretation and explanation'. Ideas on meaning making (notably Bruner, 1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995) and ideologisation (notably Eagleton, 1991; Billig *et al.*, 1988; Billig, 1995; Abercrombie *et al.*, 1980) support the critical analysis of their discourses to explore how the participants make sense of their situations.

Key words:

Teaching Assistants, critical discourse analysis, ideology, Actor-Network Theory, teachers, meaning making, 'National Agreement'.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis focuses on the (ambiguous) position and positioning of TAs as members of the school workforce 'remodelled' and 'modernised' through policies such as the 'National Agreement' (NA) (DfES, 2003c; ATL *et al.*, 2003). The empirical data for this work was generated from the voices of twenty-four TAs who work in schools in both the primary and secondary sectors in England. The foregrounding and analysis of the words of the TAs are central purposes of this project, as is its contribution to knowledge about the experiences of this important and under-researched section of the school workforce. Under the recent New Labour governments (1997 – 2010) policy was used as a tool to attempt to realise a particular manifestation of the state and of allied public services, including education. The criticality of this thesis comes in large part from its engagement with trends in education policy and from its examination of the experiences of Teaching Assistants (TAs) whose working lives take place in social and material environments that have been shaped and conditioned by the effects of those policies

Theoretically and methodologically my thesis adopts a broadly relativist, post-structuralist, and constructivist paradigm. I draw on aspects Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (1987; 2005) to facilitate a theorisation of the TAs' social and material environment. The examination of the words of the participants is carried out through qualitative methods appropriate to facilitate critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001; Potter and Wetherell, 1987) and complemented with theories of meaning-making (notably Bruner, 1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995), and ideologisation (notably Eagleton, 1991; Billig *et al.*, 1988; Billig, 1995; Abercrombie *et al.*, 1980). The qualitative data of the participants' words come from their participation in focus groups, interviews and from written work they produced as students on a Foundation Degree programme. Throughout the discussion and examination of the data my concern is to allow the TAs' words to determine the categories and themes that are presented and analysed. My

theoretical tools enable the data and analysis to be related to the wider picture of New Labour's (1997 – 2010) modernisation agenda for schools.

In light of the above, this research has the following purposes:

- to gain a sense of the recent historical development of education and public sector policy and of the evolution of the TA as a result of those policies, particularly within the period ca. 2002 – 2010;
- to consider the ideologies underlying the policies;
- to give 'voice' to a number of TAs across a small range of educational settings;
- to develop an interpretivist theoretical framework based around social constructivism and meaning making (Bruner, 1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995), Actor Network Theory (*inter alia* Latour, 1987, 2005), and critical language analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Fairclough, 2001) to overcome the separation of macro and micro-level analysis and interpretation and the dissolution of traditional binary oppositions and hierarchies of structure and agency;
- to examine the discourses of my participants for indications of the effect of policy on the shaping of their professional identity, subjectivity and agency;
- to gain insights into where my participants locate themselves in relation to each other and other networks in education;
- to gain insights into how my participants define their roles and how they describe the work they do;
- to identify similarity and variation in the participants' discourse(s) across a small range of educational settings;
- to conclude with a consideration of my findings because they can be considered to come at the end of a particular 'era' in education policy and practice as well as to attempt some

consideration of the findings in light of the direction of the new coalition government's education policy.

This research consequently engages with the following research questions to support a coherent and themed structure for the project:

How and why did 'policy' come to promote the inclusion and development of TAs as members of the school workforce? Does policy promote particular relations of power and ground itself in particular ideologies?

What significant themes have been identified in the literature about TAs?

How is 'policy' evident in the discourses, descriptions and discussions of my participants? How does 'policy' shape the subjectivity and agency of my participants? Do other factors than policy shape the subjectivity and agency of my participants?

Do the participants' discourses, descriptions and discussions vary between and within sites?

What do the words of the participants reveal about them as knowledgeable subjects and agents, and about the 'educational environments' within which they work? What are the implications of this?

Is there evidence of the operation of relations of power? What are the implications of these relations?

Do the words of my participants support, enhance, refute or supplement the themes identified in the literatures?

What conclusions can be drawn about the work of the participants as TAs, a 'definition' of their role, the historical and possible future development of their role and the education system?

I move now through Chapter 1 to discuss my motivation to undertake this research project and, to offer an explanation of my standpoint as researcher, analyst and partial commentator on the findings of my research. I go on to relate these ideas to the construction of education in England and wider aspects of this society as a Western democracy that supports a capitalist free market often characterised as neo-liberal. Part of this framing includes a discussion of how the final ideas for this thesis were informed by my journey on the EdD programme and an indication of the development of my theoretical and methodological approach. Chapter 1 closes with an overview of the remaining chapters of the thesis to facilitate its reading.

Intrinsic and personal motivations and interest

My time on the EdD Programme coincided with significant changes in my professional life linked to changes in engagement with a range of professionals involved in education. For about half of the time of my EdD studies my main professional roles were, firstly, as lead tutor on a university-based post-graduate certificate in education (PGCE) initial teacher training (ITT) programme for aspiring modern languages teachers in the secondary sector. This was followed by approximately two years as manager of the ITT partnership between my university and local primary and secondary schools. Subsequently I moved from ITT to Professional Development (PD) where my role was as tutor to TAs and HLTAs undertaking part-time study on Foundation Degrees whilst being employed in schools and settings. It was during this latter phase that the fieldwork for this thesis was carried out, and I was tutor to the majority of the participants in this research.

The development of the ideas for this thesis mirrors the changes in my professional life. Initially the thesis centred around an analysis of the discourses (Fairclough, 2001) between HE tutors,

school-based ITT mentors, and ITT trainees in the mediation of their understanding and application of the professional standards for qualified teacher status (QTS) (TDA,2006: latterly 'Professional Standards for Teachers' TDA, 2007c) during the PGCE training year where the trainee teachers were moving towards the award of QTS. I was struck by the great concern in ITT with questions of policy compliance (e.g. OfSTED criteria) and with the bureaucratic nature of the monitoring and evaluation of the training. The bureaucratisation involved powerful texts which originated in and supported policy. In terms of theoretical approaches I found that poststructuralism offered me a way of thinking about the power behind the language of text and the relationships that the text can affect and shape. I drew on Derrida's (1978) notion of binary opposition and certain feminist writers (Smith, 1990; Weedon, 1997) to develop my ideas on text and power and to consider implications for individuals who are involved in the discursive mediation of the 'powerful' policy text of the Professional Standards for Qualified Teacher Status (TDA, 2006). I explored ideas around powerful knowledge (power/knowledge: Foucault, 1974) where policy could be considered an (all) powerful, 'authoritative' or 'hegemonic' voice or discourse (Ball,1990 and 1994; Fairclough, 2001; Usher and Edwards, 1994) and thus shut down or marginalise other discourses (Foucault, 1974).

My move to PD and consequent encounters with TAs introduced me to a different group of education workers whose presence within schools appeared less subject to a policy hegemony, less 'bureaucratised' and 'textualised' than that of trainee teachers. On the other hand, their presence and role had been given greater prominence through the National Agreement (DfES, 2003c; ATL *et al.*, 2003), with attempts to 'professionalise' this group of workers in response to the government's identified need to 'raise standards' and tackle issues with teachers' workload and recruitment. An examination of literature (see Chapter 2) gave further insights into the ambiguous position and positioning of TAs in relation to pupils, qualified teachers and school leaders/managers. The ambiguity led me to explore TAs' perceptions and understandings of

relationships and practices with other groups in their schools. In order to facilitate the exploration theoretically I drew on three complementary strands: Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 1997; 2005), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001; Potter and Wetherell, 1987) and meaning making (Bruner, 1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Synnowich 1995). This enabled a nuanced approach to and analysis of the words of the participants in terms of their social and physical locations within schools and the social relationships and practices in which they take part, including relations of power. Most research into the 'remodelled' school workforce privileges the voices of teachers and managers/leaders: my thesis has the voices of the TAs at its centre and is designed to contribute new knowledge to the understanding of TAs as members of the school workforce in a period of significant educational reform.

Language and the analysis of discourse are central themes that run through this thesis. My interest in the language people use to make sense of the world deepened at the time of my change in role from ITT manager to PD tutor and coincided with my attendance at two school-university partnership conferences hosted by a university. One of the conferences focused on ITT and the other on PD. Part of both conferences was given over to presentations by representatives from partner schools and organisations. My change of roles meant that I had a view of both sides of an education faculty's work and was perhaps therefore more sensitised to the kinds of language that would be used in these two *fora*.

I was particularly struck by the language of three presenters: a CPD (Continuing Professional Development) manager from a secondary school, a representative from a Local Authority (LA) and a headteacher from a primary school. Their conceptualisations of teachers, pupils and education were alien to me. Perhaps I was expecting the presenters' language to be exploratory, tentative and 'idealistic' in terms of education as a life-enhancing experience and public good. The language was none of these. Theirs was a language of instrumentalisation, surveillance,

domination, compliance, economic value and measurable outcomes. I must add that all the presenters appeared to speak with sincerity.

The presentation by the high school CPD manager contained these phrases:

- 'For the journey'
- 'We didn't make a loss on that (training project)'
- 'Learning should be lifelong'
- 'Line Managers need to have rigour'
- 'We made a reconnaissance among the staff' staff' (as to whether they were 'telling the truth' about their 'achievements' at Performance Management meetings)
- 'CPD is embedded in our Performance Management structure'
- 'We (managers) told our teachers they are learners'
- 'Staff have personalised, devolved responsibility for their own CPD'
- 'Staff need to feel it (CPD) is personalised'
- 'Colleagues find CPD empowering'

I have ordered the quotations to demonstrate what might be considered her/his perhaps subconscious but nonetheless processual way of defining people in relation to the wider context of the school and, by extension, aspects of the wider society. The first two quotations draw on discourses of the capitalist economy with the first taking directly from the recent Lloyds-TSB advertising campaign, whilst the second considers training in terms of monetary profit and loss. The third quotation draws on the policy discourse of 'Lifelong Learning' and places teachers' CPD within this framework. The next four quotations reveal the hierarchical, patriarchal organisation of the school and the managerialist preoccupations and drivers of the school management, with an evident lack of trust, and attempts at enforced direction through covert surveillance and overt monitoring. The final three quotations present the objectified teacher in relation to CPD: the words 'need to feel' betray that the process is potentially cynical, manipulative and inauthentic

attempting to enforce aspects of teacher identity and agency. In the final quotation, the process is brought full-circle where the empowerment of teachers is within the parameters of the management-determined and –driven purposes of CPD within the wider school context.

Towards the end of the presentation s/he said: ‘You must celebrate colleagues’ success.’ This led me to consider several things:

- What kind of success does a teacher experience in this environment?
- On the other hand, is management perhaps using management structures to subvert the national policy as a means of establishing worthwhile teaching and learning developments for the school’s own particular context?
- If so, how would managers defend this kind of approach to staff philosophically and ethically?

The presentation given by the LA representative made reference to an accredited, subject-specific course for secondary teachers that the LA had developed in partnership with the university. In designing its courses, the LA consults with schools to identify professional development ‘needs’ as they are determined by the school’s OfSTED (Office for Standards in Education) Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) or by the reports from the school’s most recent OfSTED inspection. As well as this direct link to the statutory monitoring mechanism, there is also overt reference made to the identifiable ‘improvements’ in pupils’ attainment against the National Curriculum (NC) levels when the effectiveness of the course is evaluated, ‘measured’ and reported back to the LA by headteachers. From this example it can be seen that the systems are in a cycle of self-referral: the individual has to strive to meet externally identified development targets and performance criteria, and is monitored throughout the process.

The two examples I have cited give evidence of some of the current effects of policy on various practices within education from the shaping of styles of personnel management to the experience of pupils in the classroom. My next example widens out the discussion to the future that some educators envisage, in all good faith, for their learners.

At the second conference, the headteacher from the primary school talked about the research that a colleague in the school had undertaken as part of a whole-school curriculum review. The headteacher felt that the findings of the research had enabled colleagues to refocus and develop the curriculum to 'prepare (our) children for the future' by 'equipping' them with the necessary skills and knowledge as adult workers. Perhaps s/he was here borrowing from government policy rhetoric. Yet, at one point in the presentation, she appeared to undermine and contradict her own argument when she alluded to research that maintains that two-thirds of the job roles that current pupils will eventually fulfil do not yet exist. My thoughts following from this were not confined solely to education but also to the wider economic and life-quality prospects for these children:

- How could the headteacher be so certain that the curriculum was 'equipping' them in a suitable way?
- What if the skills and knowledge turn out to be totally unsuitable?
- Why was there such a stress on economic outcomes for education?
- If one is persuaded by the argument that a main purpose of education is to equip children for work, then what will be the long-term consequences to these individuals of being members of a large pool of similarly skilled and educated workers? The worth of a commodity is determined by its relative scarcity or abundance.
- History shows that capitalism manifests periods of recession and fluctuations in levels of employment. Will the knowledge and skills the children acquire in school sustain them if they experience periods of enforced 'economic' idleness?

To amplify the above point, 'The Lost Generation' a report and discussion about unemployment and young people on 15 July 2009 on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) 'Newsnight' programme (BBC, 2009b) featured two young, unemployed people. One had graduated in 2008 in Investment and Financial Risk Management. The other was nineteen years old and had undertaken a wide variety of training courses in, for example, childcare, firefighting, and air cabin crew skills. Jim Knight, the then UK Employment Minister, and David Blanchflower, from Dartmouth College (USA) and former member of the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee, were also taking part in the discussion.

Significantly, one of the points raised highlighted that the education system had been redesigned through policy over recent years to prepare young people for work. The report also focussed on figures from the July 2009 'Labour Force Survey' which showed that 2.4 million people were unemployed and that 40% of those unemployed were under 25. In July 2009 400,000 graduates were entering the job market but 'downsizing their job expectations and competing with those with fewer qualifications' (BBC, 2009b). Many of these graduates were coming from 'vocational' degrees 'armed with CVs, Powerpoint skills and laser-like focus' (BBC, 2009b). Against this background were the two unemployed but well-trained and qualified young people who had taken the education and training opportunities offered to them.

My intention in citing these examples is to illustrate how policy seemed to pervade the practices of social institutions such as schools, becoming a justification for types of action and engendering other actions (in educators, pupils, students, school leavers, graduates) who are positioned in particular relationships.

Mentally stepping back from these experiences I began to reflect on how these people, at the conferences and on television, were also creating their own texts for their own purposes in their own contexts, as well drawing on, and privileging, other texts such as policy. However, their words were also 'stronger' than that insofar as their words were the foundations for and reflections of action and possibilities for action.

If on the one hand, I was concerned with the ways in which policy emphases entered the discourses of school management, on the other my reflections took me in the direction of enquiry into the experiences of Teaching Assistants (TAs) as members of the 'modernised' and 'remodelled' school workforce and with whom I would be working in my new PD tutor role. My initial impressions of TAs were of a group of workers who seemed to enjoy considerable freedom within schools from the policy-driven agendas highlighted in the words of the presenters at the conferences.

My thoughts also led me to consider the social nature of language and texts, as well as the social purposes to which language and text can be put. I found that these words from Said resonated with me in helping to establish an overall and intrinsically motivating purpose to my enquiry:

Essays are concerned with relations between things, with values and concepts, *in fine*, with significance . . . What the essay expresses is a yearning for conceptuality and intellectuality, as well as a resolution to the ultimate questions of life.

(Said, 1984:51)

Replacing 'Essays are . . .' with 'This thesis is . . .' gives a good idea of what I am exploring in these pages. The 'significance' of my work comes from its being grounded in the material and social world and examines how people draw on the resources provided by that world to make sense of and make their way through that world; it looks at aspects of the material world in which people

live, at the values people espouse, at how they express them, at how they 'live' them as well as at how they attempt to conceptualise their world. All this is one kind of conceptuality and intellectuality as expressed by my participants. Theirs may or may not be a result of yearning, sometimes it may even be cynical, manipulative or malevolent, but it is certainly not without its emotional and affective side.

Another kind of conceptuality and intellectuality definitely results from a yearning on my part to develop my understanding of my fellow humans and the society we have inherited, that we shape and share for better or worse, and that we then leave for future generations. For me these are always among the 'ultimate questions of life' regardless of the theme and approach chosen for a particular research project or enquiry. Whether any resolution of these questions will be achieved in these pages remains to be seen. The least I hope for is that these pages will provoke thought and further discussion whilst adding to what is known about the social world.

Extrinsic context and interest

As mentioned above, I had decided that the focus of my enquiry would be on the experiences of TAs as I would have relatively ready access to a number of these workers through my new role as PD tutor. At the inception of my enquiry, there was an assumption that policy would play a role in the experiences of the TAs. On reflection this assumption could be considered to have resulted from my own exposure to what seemed to be constant education policy initiatives during a working life of over thirty years spent teaching in secondary and higher education.

My research set out to enquire into the experiences of a number of TAs who exist as an 'official' group of education workers a result of New Labour policy, namely the National Agreement (DfES, 2002a; ATL *et al.*, 2003) which set out to 'remodel' and 'modernise' the school workforce. In addition, the unprecedented number of education policies went hand in hand with New Labour's

allied and wider social reform policies such as Every Child Matters (ECM) (DfES, 2004a) and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) (CWDC, 2007); both of which aimed for a 'joined-up' approach across all sections of the children's workforce through 'multi-agency' working.

In the broader political context, my enquiries took place at the end of the period of New Labour governments (1997 – 2010) which brought in an unprecedented number of education policies and initiatives (Ball, 2008). Indeed the overt involvement by national policy makers in education had grown particularly during the last quarter of the twentieth century as the purposes and place of education in society were re-examined. This re-examination went hand-in-hand with a shift from a welfarist to a post-welfarist state, from a Keynesian state to a 'neo-liberal' state. New Labour's project presented a statist approach, in contrast to the Conservatives' (1979 – 1997) more purely free market approach.

The policy background to this thesis is the period from approximately 2002 – 2010. In Chapter 2 in my chronological and thematic treatments of policy and related literature I draw attention to some of the persistent themes carried through from the previous Conservative administrations (1979 – 1997) where the underlying theme is the relocation of knowledge about education, its purpose and its control from the policy centre. Over the period in question a body of literature had developed which examined the remodelling of the school workforce and the roles and remits of TAs, as well as the relationships of these aspects to wider social and political themes. My joint, discursive treatment of the interplay between policy and literature in Chapter 2 is intended as illustrative of the discourses adopted by the academy vis-à-vis remodelling policy and practice. My own contribution to knowledge about the remodelling agenda and the relations and practices of TAs lies in its foregrounding of the 'voices' of a number of TAs as they describe and discuss their experiences as members of the 'remodelled' school workforce. Whilst there are some notable exceptions (for example, Dunne *et al.*, 2008; Balshaw, 2010; Graves, 2011), the 'voices' of

TAs generally come through large scale studies, are heard alongside the 'voices' of teachers and school managers / leaders, or are secondary to the privileged policy. In my study the TAs speak for themselves and about themselves. To an extent, then, my study is an attempt to 'story different narratives from those presented to us, to answer back and to formulate alternative ways of working' (Gunter, 2008:267). The logical consequence of this is a critical approach which, for example, problematises policy intentions and rhetoric in light of the 'lived' experience of the participants in the research.

This approach is within the tradition of the critical policy sociology of education which, for example, explores whether and how the discourses of education policy attempt to alter the subjectivity and agency of both educators and educated. Many contributions to the national and international literatures attest this. Here I cite a very limited but illustrative sample: 'lifelong learning' policy and governmentality (Edwards, 2002), teachers and performativity (Ball, 2003), workforce remodelling (Bach *et al.*, 2006; Gunter, 2007), the construction of teacher identity in policy documents (Søreide, 2007), the construction of the worthy citizen through 'lifelong learning' (Walker 2009), the rhetoric of the centrality of the teacher in international education reform policies (Larsen, 2010).

Developing a theorised approach

This thesis therefore aims to look critically at the discourses of a number of Teaching Assistants (TAs) from primary and secondary schools in England as they talked and wrote about their experiences and perceptions of their work. It also examines the extent to which 'policy' enters into the discourses employed by the TAs as they describe and discuss their working lives and interactions with others. Primarily, however, my theoretical and methodological approach is designed to allow the TAs to be heard and then to relate what they said back to the policy, the literature and the wider education 'system'.

The source of evidence and data for this thesis is language and text. My theoretical framework therefore has the intention of enabling a critical reading of the texts produced by the TAs. In addition this kind of project brings together other texts in its production – a production which results in a new text, in a contribution to discourse and knowledge. This seems therefore an appropriate point at which to offer my definition of text as any form of written or spoken language. This research project draws primarily on the following types of text:

- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Participants' written texts in the form of assignments submitted as part of their university programmes of study
- Policy documents
- Articles from academic journals
- TV news articles
- Newspaper articles
- Books
- Informal jottings, particularly in this introductory chapter, from professional (as opposed to academic) conferences at my university.

Drawing on these various forms of text to stimulate, inform and educate me has contributed to my creation of this specific new text to a very significant degree. Moreover, all the texts in my list are reflections on the world and exist as real objects in that world full of other objects, as does this new text of mine which, in its turn, is a reflection on the world.

Supporting this, Said (1984:37) views the creation of a text as an event taking place in the social world. This is an appealing notion as it carries with it ideas of text as resulting from human agency - actions and interactions. Underlying this are the intentions, purposes, and motivations

that contribute to and affect the creation of the text. The external influences on the creator and her/his reflections are also important. If the creation of a text takes place in the real world and a text exists in the real world then the reading of the text must equally take place within that world. The act of reading as an interpretive activity must involve some form of reference to and from the world and with the text (Said, 1984:34) and the meanings individuals ascribe to the world must be readable from their texts. Text therefore results from actions and interactions between the individual and others and with their environments. Text reflects engagement with social and material aspects of being and doing in the world: there is an interconnection between what individuals are and do and how they talk about what they are and do.

My identification of relevant theoretical frameworks and analytical tools needed to take into account ways of analysing the words of the TAs to locate them within their social contexts, to enable the identification of categories from their discourses and to attempt to explain their words in light of wider social and political questions – i.e. to deal with aspects at the local and the societal as questions of scale and range. A similar issue of scale and range arose with the inclusion of policy in this thesis. Policy can be interpreted as affecting the macro-level of enquiry, whilst my desire to let the TAs' voices be heard can be interpreted as a concern with the micro – level.

Similarly, my approach to identifying a methodology and methods was determined not by a desire to take issue with the value and applicability of philosophies and sociologies which defend macro-level interpretations of the social. Rather the need was to make sense of the very local and particular circumstances of the TAs in my research with a view to examining how they stabilise and calibrate (Latour, 2005) their worlds through drawing on the material and social resources available to them.

Hence there is a quite eclectic mix of theorists in the methodology chapter of this work as I engage with theories that can illuminate the social location of my participants through theorisations of the ways in which social subjects act and make sense of their world. Latour's (1987; 2005) Actor-Network Theory (ANT) gives a way into analysing how individuals and collectivities interact and interlock with each other and their material environments (Fenwick, 2010). Other aspects of theory come notably from Bruner (1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995) and Gramsci (1971) as providing insights into how individuals make sense of their world. Through this project I have also attempted to be mindful of the 'subject positions' of my participants as members of networks containing asymmetries of power (Latour, 2005). The introduction of the ideas of meaning making and power led through Eagleton (1991), Billig *et al.* (1988), Billig (1995) and Abercrombie *et al.* (1980) to explore how people ideologise their worlds and their place within it. The method I adopt for the analysis of the words of my participants draws principally on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2001) and Potter and Wetherell (1987). In brief, my approach falls into a broadly relativist, post-structuralist, constructivist and qualitative paradigm.

Within this paradigm, my approach to 'policy' is to treat it as a discursive tool which deploys language to get other people to do things, to change things. I therefore go from a position that assumes policy has power to 'alter the state of affairs' (Latour, 2005:70). Policy often contains a justification of why things need doing and what things will be like as a result of people's actions. Policy draws on and sets up other discourses and therefore contains and contributes to what people know and do. Therefore policy is not socially neutral because it contains an interpretation of how things are/were and how they should be, and because it intends people to act in particular ways for particular reasons in relation to each other. Part of policy's power rests therefore in its ability to set up transformative relations between people and to sanction, instigate, enhance or end particular relations of power and particular forms of knowledge.

Whilst one might follow Latour's (2005) interpretation that policy can be considered an 'immutable mobile', that is as a resource which is the same in whichever social context it appears, policy as on-the-table documents does not ordinarily feature in people's day-to-day encounters with each other or in their encounters with their working worlds. And, whilst policy may have a definite view of what people should do, people have the free will to accept or reject the actions which policy proposes. However, the discourses and actions generated by policy result in the production of other discourses, texts, artefacts and acts which make policy's effects pervasive and set up choices which refer back to the policy or which create new openings for subsequent policy.

My interpretation of power, therefore, is as a means of 'altering a state of affairs' (Latour 2005:70) and how this is achieved in the world. It is therefore an effect of agency. One of Latour's (2005) definitions of agency is the effect of 'forcing, coercing, encouraging, facilitating others to do things' (2005:53). Making power 'visible' as an effect of agency also enabled resonance with CDA and meaning making as well as on ideologising the world.

Reading this thesis

Having established the purposes and research questions as well as the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for undertaking this project, I move now to present the structure of this thesis by chapter, each with a brief outline.

Chapter 2: Policy and Literature Review

Starting with a chronological approach to policy, Chapter 2 locates the National Agreement (DfES, 2003c; NRT, 2003; ATL *et al.*, 2003) as a pivotal policy 'moment' shaping the development of what came to be called the 'wider school workforce'. The chapter moves on to examine interrelated

themes from policy and literature *in tandem* to provide a sense of 'location' for the TAs who participated in this research. Central to the argument of Chapter 2 is the wresting and control of authoritative knowledge from the professional to the political sphere where the political also privileges particular views of the economisation of education and of the individual.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and Methodological Approach

In Chapter 3 I continue my 'location' of the TAs: in this case through a theorisation of TAs as knowledgeable subjects and agents whose autonomy is located in and bounded by a social and material environment. I draw on Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 1987 and 2005) to theorise the social and material environment. Through ideas from Fairclough (2001), Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Bruner (1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995), I highlight the centrality of language as a resource that subjects deploy to understand and mobilise social and material resources in their environments. A discussion of the role of ideology (Gramsci, 1971; Billig *et al.*, 1988; Eagleton, 1991; Billig, 1995 *inter alia*) forms part of the theorisation of language as a resource. This relativist and constructivist approach enables me to establish a theoretical framework for the discussion and description of my research tools in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Methods

Informed by my appreciation and interpretation of the theories discussed in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 establishes research tools appropriate for undertaking critical discourse analysis (CDA) and a 'free' critical language analysis (CLA) (Fairclough, 2001 *inter alia*; Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Chapter 4 also explores ethical issues involved in this type of research.

Chapter 5: Findings

In Chapter 5 I begin the examination of the discourses of my participants broadly in line with Fairclough's (2001) suggested approach of description, with Fairclough's (2001) suggested

subsequent stages of interpretation and explanation left for Chapter 6. The establishment of the 'descriptive categories' (Fairclough, 2001) arising from the participants' discourses about their social and material situations draws on Latour's ANT (2005 *inter alia*).

Chapter 6: Interpretation and Explanation

In Chapter 6 I use the 'descriptive categories' established in the previous chapter to provide 'analytical categories' for the interpretation and explanation (Fairclough, 2001) of the participants' discourses. Through the interlinked stages of interpretation and explanation I move to examine the participants' discourses in the light of the theoretical and methodological tools explored in Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 7: Conclusions, Recommendations, Reflections

In Chapter 7 I conclude the thesis by considering how my own discursive engagement with the economic, political, sociological, theoretical, and ethical themes addressed in this work has shaped my own thinking and professional practice. I also offer some thoughts on possible future implications for policy and identify areas for future research.

Chapter 2: Setting the scene: policy and literature

Introduction

This chapter presents aspects of policy and related themes from the literature *in tandem*. This approach has been chosen as opposed to a purely chronological approach because of a desire to set the development of policy in the context of matters worthy of wider sociological consideration and as providing a sense of 'location' for the TAs who participated in this research. I also proceed with this approach as representing how a chosen selection of the literature has entered into 'dialogue' or responded to the foundations and effects of education and wider social policy.

In line with the purposes of this thesis this chapter aims:

- to gain a sense of the recent historical development of education and public sector policy and of the evolution of the TA in the context of those policies, particularly within the period ca. 2002 – 2010;
- to consider the ideologies underlying the policies.

The chapter explores the following research questions:

- How and why did 'policy' come to promote the inclusion and development of TAs as members of the school workforce? Does policy promote particular relations of power and ground itself in particular ideologies?
- What significant themes have been identified in the literature about TAs?

Underlying the discussion of policy in this chapter is an understanding and interpretation of 'policy' as a tool or technology (Foucault, 1979 and 1988b; Rose, 1989 and 1996; Edwards, 2002; Ball, 2008a; Miller and Rose, 2008) that attempts to generate alterations in discourse, relations, practices, and meanings. In the case of this research project policy is operating within the context

of an advanced capitalist democracy (Rose, 1996; Jessop, 2002) where, for example, it has had the intention of creating the social conditions which privilege the operation of the free market, the production of free labour and the accumulation of private capital (Panitch, 1994; Gamble, 2009).

Public education in England has traditionally been provided by the state with some provision coming from religious groups. This chapter explores a range of significant policy trends at the level of the state which contributed to the emergence and development of the roles of TAs in primary and secondary schools in England particularly both during the period of approximately 2002 – 2010 as well as with appropriate reference to earlier policies from the late 1970s through the Conservative years of 1979 – 1997¹. The selected policy trends were a central part of the then New Labour government's agenda of school workforce 'modernisation' and 'remodelling' (see, for example, DCSF, 2008a and b, 2009a; DfEE 1998; DfES, 2001 and 2002c; TDA and SWDB, 2006; TDA 2009a and b) and were broadly contemporary with other New Labour reforms of the public sector (see, for example, Cabinet Office, 2008; PMSU, 2006, 2007a and b; PSRT, 2006). New Labour governments (1997 – 2010) were responsible for an education 'policy epidemic' (Ball, 2008a:39) and 'policy technolog(ies)' (Ball, 2008a:41). 'Remodelling' and 'modernisation' were aspects of this epidemic and were linked to other features of education reform such as policy drives to raise standards as well as an alignment of education with economic purposes as opposed to other more broadly social purposes. Equally important within this discussion of policy is the extension of the idea of the 'policy epidemic' to include the intersection of education policy and reform with other public sector policy and reform (Butt and Gunter, 2005), for example through Every Child Matters (ECM) (DfES, 2004a) and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) (CWDC, 2007).

¹ See Annex 8:274 for a chronology of selected policies

Situating education policy within a wider policy context is an approach advocated by policy sociologists and critics (notably Ball, 2008a *inter alia*; Gunter, 2007 *inter alia*; Ozga, 2000 and 2002) as a method of identifying the ideologies and power relations which permeate, in this case, government endeavours to shape the public sector and the working lives of its employees. Here I contend that the trend underlying the development of the aims of reform policies was one of wresting the control and definition of knowledge away from education professionals to achieve a discourse of education that would harmonise with a particular ideological view of the state and its citizens in support of a particular manifestation of advanced capitalism. Here I have drawn on Panitch (1994), Barber (1996) and Jessop (2002). In the case of education reform policy, the attempted prescriptions of agency for managers, teachers, TAs and learners were allied to the attempted control and prescription of knowledge as ways of being and doing as well as of knowing.

In order to achieve the above, the chapter has the following sections:

- A selective policy chronology: towards the National Agreement;
- Discourses of the economic and education: variations on neo-liberal ideological themes;
- The National Agreement;
- Discourses of prescribing, measuring, performing and knowing: standards in education;
- Discourses around the division of labour: (de)professionalisation, pedagogy and reform;
- Discourses around the division of labour: the leadership and management of TAs and teachers.

This chapter acknowledges the centrality of the National Agreement (NA) (DfES, 2003c; NRT, 2003; ATL *et al.*, 2003) between the New Labour government, employers and the education trades unions (with the exception of the National Union of Teachers (NUT)) as a policy document which both recognised the then contemporary teacher recruitment and retention problems facing

schools and which stimulated the subsequent changes to the school workforce through the 'remodelling' agenda. To reflect the centrality of the National Agreement, it is situated approximately in the middle of this chapter because of its place in the 'flow' of the preceding discourses whose linked practices and relations had led to a situation demanding a policy response and to the subsequent discourses around the division of labour in schools and the public sector more generally.

The sections preceding the discussion of the NA are intended to set the scene chronologically and ideologically, advancing a view of how, over the preceding quarter of a century, the economic purposes of education had come to dominate discourse. The sections following the discussion of the NA are intended to show how discourse about the specification of inputs and outcomes of education and around the division of labour in schools subsequently supplemented the discourse.

A selective policy chronology: towards the National Agreement

Whilst acknowledging the centrality of the NA, it would be a mistake to succumb to the temptation to see the NA's approach to the remodelling and modernising of the school workforce as an isolated starting point rather than as a stage in the development of wider education and social policy (Clark and Newman, 1997; Edwards, 2002; Butt and Gunter, 2005; Ball, 2008a). As much as anything the NA was a response to conditions such as a crisis in the recruitment and retention of sufficient numbers of qualified teachers which resulted in great part from previous policy initiatives. Among the other effects of these previous policy initiatives were the removal of the control of knowledge from education professionals to the policy-maker, a re-conceptualisation of the place and purpose of education and educators in relation to society, and a re-conceptualisation of all of the above in relation to the economy.

In the context of these re-conceptualisations, the NA can be seen as a pivotal policy because it altered the relations and practices of teachers, managers and support staff through its 'official' recognition of the roles that support staff were to play in schools and through its indication of the kinds of relationships that school managers and teachers were to have in relation to support staff. Consequent and subsequent policy discourse and work needed to take into account the presence of the appropriate members of wider school workforce as governments introduced further changes in education and wider public sector reforms.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century the purposes of education and educators had come to be questioned as the post-war settlement of state education was considered by some politicians to be unsuited to the social, political and economic conditions of the time. The predominant model of the teaching profession from at least 1945 to about 1986 had been that of the 'autonomous professional' whose work had been framed, guided or facilitated² by a school's headteacher, the LEA and the ministerial department, with curriculum content and choice of pedagogical approach resting largely with the individual teacher. Debate about education had traditionally taken place within the sphere of the educators themselves.

The neo-liberal and neo-conservative Black Papers of the 1970s and Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan's Ruskin College Speech of 1976 contributed to the undermining of this prevailing model of the professional autonomy of teachers and schools because they criticised education from outside education and framed their criticism of education by attempting to show it as unfit for the social and economic conditions of the time. Ball (2008a) argued that the agendas set by these debates provided the political and ideological grounding for the policies and reforms that continued through the last part of the twentieth century and first decade of the present century,

² The act of choosing the most appropriate words here to give a flavour of autonomy or 'loose' management serves to demonstrate how the language and discourse have changed in the intervening years.

with Callaghan's speech in 1976 being a watershed moment. The speech gave the seal of approval to moves to question the fitness for purpose not just of the education system but of educators themselves.

Some writers (Helsby, 1999; Ball, 2008a) referred to the tone and rhetoric of these debates as a 'discourse of derision' of the education system and profession that undermined the accepted view and operation of them as being run and staffed by autonomous experts. The derisive nature of the discourse in turn 'softened up' the teaching profession leading it to accept uncritically the measures that were to transform knowledge, practice and relations within the education system. An initial move in the transformation came in the Conservatives' Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988 which contributed to a situation where schooling became increasingly built around policy-prescribed curricula and pedagogy complemented with allied policy-prescribed mechanisms of target-setting, monitoring, reporting and measurement and a consequent significant intensification of teachers' workload (Apple, 1986; Apple and Jungck, 1996). Over the next decade or so prescription and the intensification of teachers' work impacted negatively on autonomous and creative pedagogy as well as on teacher recruitment and retention (George and Clay, 2008:110).

ERA with its introduction of a National Curriculum (NC) set in train the development of a system of 'performativity' for teachers (Ball, 2003) and prescribed knowledge for children, both surveilled from the policy centre and subject to increasing centralisation (Fisher, 2008:255). According to Whitty (2008: 168), for example, ERA 'represented the most comprehensive legislation on education since 1944' and set up trajectories which would be continued under New Labour (Fisher, 2008; Ranson, 2008).

Justifying reform on the grounds of a neo-liberal interpretation of globalisation the Conservatives also drew on modernist, essentialising, rationalising ideas from the private sector along with neo-liberal ideas of exposing schools to internal and external markets (Ball, 2008b) to transform the agency of teachers and their managers. Teaching became an increasingly managed profession with a move away from the teacher as an expert, autonomous pedagogue to one of the teacher 'delivering' a prescribed curriculum and the teacher as an accountable producer of measurable data, commodified as a product of education. Parents and pupils were recast as consumers of education (Ozga, 2009:150) with a choice of schools informed by the comparison of the 'market information' provided by the commodified outputs of schools (Ball 2008a:81). Being a pupil or learner took on a different meaning in the period 1988-1992. Pupils were objects of reform who were to be taught particular subjects to provide particular measurable outcomes from their work (Gunter and Thomson, 2007). Schools were recast as institutions in a market-place of education whose results (i.e. the measurable outcomes of pupils' learning) were used to attract parents and pupils.

There were thus two forms of external pressure forcing change on schools: the prescription and measurement of educational 'outcomes' together with judgement by parents as they considered and compared individual schools' suitability for their children. The 'league tables' resulted from the use of summative assessments made of pupils' work at what were considered key points in their education. There was therefore a cycle of 'teaching, testing and reporting' (Howes, 2003) established where the outcomes were 'high stakes' (Barker, 2008) for schools and teachers: parental choice could be exercised positively where schools had shown good outcomes often after 'teaching to the test'. In 1992 the Ofsted inspection regime was introduced to monitor, evaluate and judge the 'effectiveness' of teachers and schools in delivering the policy-prescribed outcomes of education. Here a shift is discernible in the location of power within the reformed structures of education where the drive for 'development' or 'improvement' and measure of

'success' are externally decided and judged and where the agency of teachers within the system becomes conditioned by and responsive to these structural changes and shifts in power relations. Implicit in the definition of success is the notion of failure, and implicit in both is the pressure to 'perform'. The Conservative government of the time laid a further important foundation stone for the construction of future education policy in the Education Act of 1993 and its intervention in 'failing schools'. These were schools that did not come up to the mark in terms of turning specified inputs into at least satisfactory measurable outputs or that 'failed' to maintain their earlier 'improvements'.

1992 was a significant year in the increase of pressure on teachers and schools and in the relocation of the ownership of knowledge about teaching. This year saw the introduction of the first version of the 'standards' or 'competences' for the award of qualified teacher status. Borrowing from business models which technicised roles and processes, the standards represented an attempt to break down the work of a teacher into a list of attributes, skills and knowledge against which aspiring entrants to the profession could be assessed for their suitability to teach. Thus there was the first externally imposed policy prescription of what it meant to be a teacher. These changes meant a move away from the previous more critical, theoretical and reflective models of teacher education and training and loosened the qualification requirements for entry into the profession. As can be seen elsewhere in this discussion, the early policy work carried out in the arena of ITT/ITE would come to be mirrored in the establishment of vocational standards for TAs and HLTAs (TDA, 2007a and b).

Becoming and being a teacher altered significantly as did the definition of what it meant to be 'professional' (Ball, 2003). Being 'professional' came to be redefined as a teacher's ability to perform effectively according to externally imposed criteria. In effect, the moves meant an externally imposed 'national curriculum' for teacher training and assessment linked with the idea

of qualifying to teach through 'meeting the standards' (George and Clay, 2008:107) and achieved two things. Firstly, the government removed control of the ITT/ITE curriculum from HEIs and, secondly, the reform switched the aspiring teacher's development from being a concern about autonomous professional development to one of externally assessable and measurable goals and targets. Here parallels can be seen with the changes that were taking place in the prescription of the school curriculum and measurement of schools' success. New teachers were trained following a different model – one of measurable 'professional' standards and outcomes – and on joining the profession, they were entering schools that now 'delivered' specified curricular inputs and provided measurable pupil outcomes. The transfer of the ownership and control of professional and curricular knowledge from practitioners to policy makers was therefore enabled in the period 1988 – 1993 before New Labour took office in 1997.

Butt and Gunter (2005) argue that, following their election to government, New Labour adopted and adapted the previous restructuring and performance-driven themes of the Conservative governments into its policies. Writers such as Ball (2008a *inter alia*) and Chitty (2009) maintain that New Labour's education policies continued to put the economic purposes of education before other purely educational or wider societal considerations, making good outcomes of education synonymous with good outcomes for the economy whether in terms of employability or international competitiveness.

The economic did not only feature in New Labour policy in terms of the education system's (i.e. pupil, teacher and school) outcomes, it also continued the trend begun by the Conservatives of borrowing business models and adapting them to the education system, including the restructuring of the school workforce, and keeping the door open for the intrusion of private interests into public education. Barber (1996: 249), ideologue of New Labour, advocated importing the business practice of 're-engineering' into education with a clear focus on success

and purpose, and where 'paraprofessionals' such as TAs would be part of the 're-engineering'. The rhetoric of the 'empowerment' of workers operating in wider teams to maximise profits/drive down costs (Hartley, 2008:704) carried through to education with the recognition of TAs as having a part to play in the school team, and later, the multi-agency team, and as elements of Public Finance Initiatives/Public Private Partnerships. TAs' pedagogic work was also present in such initiatives as 'personalised learning', SEN provision, or the 'drives' for improvements in pupils' attainment.

It was Estelle Morris (2001), the then Secretary of State for Education, in her speech to the Social Market Foundation, who signalled the intention to grow the numbers of support staff with just such a focus (Kerry, 2005) framed in the rhetoric of improving standards and pupil attainment, as well as on easing the workload of teachers. Ball (2008a) reflecting on the White Paper *Schools: Achieving success* (DfES, 2001b) made a similar reference in his comments on the rhetoric employed in the document that stressed 'modernisation' and 'innovation' along with 'high minimum standards': a system that would 'echo the pace of globalisation and speed of contemporary capitalism' (Ball, 2008a:95) and placed education firmly within the economy.

Discourses of the economic and education: variations on neo-liberal ideological themes

Having looked at some of the policy trends and trajectories, this discussion moves now to examine aspects of the re-alignment in the economic, political and ideological positioning and prioritising of social groups and their interests (Hindess, 2000:82). The re-alignment of the political and ideological began with the privileging of free-market economic interests based on a neo-liberal understanding of capitalist globalisation (Gamble, 2009, 67-68) and included the debunking of post-war Keynesian welfare-state models through the crises of capitalism in the 1970s (Harvey, 2007; Klein, 2007; Gamble, 2009). In the policy developments under review it is

possible to trace ideological variations on the theme of the place of the state in relation to the free market economy and the concomitant positioning of the individual in her/his relation to the economy and the state.

Throughout the Conservative and New Labour years (1979 -2010), policy makers' uncritical adoption of capitalist globalisation was used as a justification for producing a skilled workforce for a free market (George and Clay, 2008:105; Jessop, 2002:165) to facilitate the accumulation of capital (Gunter and Thomson, 2007:27; Ball, 2008b; Ranson, 2008). To enable the production of the workforce Fisher (2008) advanced an additional interpretation of globalisation where 'economic survival depend(ed) on producing educational reforms to meet the needs of business in a competition for educational results measured in international league tables' (2008:256, (my pantheses)).

To give a contrastive context for New Labour contributions to reform, it is informative to see how the ideas of the previous Conservative administrations had laid the groundwork for subsequent New Labour policies and thinking. In the neo-liberal ideology espoused by the Conservatives, the state's role should be minimal or non-existent, and, whilst state involvement was ostensibly anathema to the Conservatives, a modern capitalist economy cannot function without a state guaranteeing a level of public services to provide an adequately educated and healthy workforce (Jessop, 2002). Panitch (1994), arguing from a Socialist perspective, advanced the view that, through the control of the state by capitalist interests, it was possible for those interests to influence the prevailing power relations within a state in favour of capitalism. He wrote:

Capitalist globalisation is a process which . . . takes place in, through, and under the aegis of states; it is encoded by them and in important respects even authored by them; and it involves a shift in power relations within states that

often means the centralisation and concentration of state powers as the necessary condition of and accompaniment to global market discipline.

(Panitch, 1994: 64)

Thus, one might argue, the Conservative's late twentieth century neo-liberal ideological drive to minimise or to remove state involvement applied more to the state's contribution to the facilitation of the free movement of private capital at a particular historical moment than to the removal of the state *per se*; or, at least, to its involvement in the areas of social policy that could be shaped to support a free market and where the powerful involvement of capitalist interests could be very active in the shaping of those social policies. Panitch (1994: 65) went on to argue that the new economic role of the capitalist state had to do with public (i.e. non-private) areas of the economy and he included here the state's 'provision of ideological, educational and communications conditions of production and trade' (1994:65).

In the light of the above comments it was perhaps therefore not surprising that the Conservatives chose to follow two linked routes in an attempt to put their neo-liberal idealism into practice. These routes were, on the one hand, the marketization of schools to enable parental choice and, on the other, prescription, measurement and monitoring to enable parental choice and to 'weed out' failing schools and teachers. The chosen method of achieving this included the imposition of a prescribed curriculum and 'outcomes' as well as the introduction of professional 'competences' for the assessment of teachers. This policy trajectory entrained ever-increasing pressure on teachers and schools to 'perform'. As teachers and schools succumbed to the pressure, the policies contributed to the national challenges faced in the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers and were thus the cue for the NA.

Panitch's discussion (1994:65) supports the setting of these policy developments of choice and prescription in a wider context of 'macro-economic organisation' where the state's work includes

‘the regulation of conditions of work’ (e.g. the professional and vocational standards, Ofsted, the NA) and ‘the provision of ideological (e.g. self-referential policies and feedback loops), educational and communications conditions of production and trade (e.g. the NC and the importance attached to IT both as a school subject and as a communication and data storage tool)’ (Panitch, 1994: 65 (my parentheses)). The combination of a prescribed curriculum and enforced, prescribed professional competences for teachers provided the basis for the knowledge about teaching and learning that mattered.

Taken together, then, the Conservative years saw the alignment of education away from being viewed as a public good to a view of education as an economic good in terms of how effectively it could contribute to the wider economy through proving the work it did and through producing quantifiable outputs in terms of learners’ achievements as fitting them for a life of work. Internally, education became a site of prescription, monitoring and control to enable these proofs. Ironically, despite the rhetoric of the small state, the Conservatives’ time in government saw unprecedented centralised state involvement in and direction of education and growth in (state) bureaucracy (Fisher, 2008:255) to manage and monitor the changes. In the light of Panitch’s (1994) arguments, this growth in state centralisation and control of education demonstrated the Conservatives’ preparedness to create the conditions necessary to support free, globalised capital and to produce a pool of free labour. As such the growth in centralisation and prescription is not contradictory of the neo-liberal free market but rather supportive of it.

In contrast to the Conservatives’ rhetorically anti-state stance, New Labour espoused a statist approach (Barber, 1996) where the state was seen as a facilitator for the fostering of social conditions which would support a free-market economy. Their statist approach to reform led to attempts to facilitate initiatives to ‘join up’ provision across the private, public, and philanthropic/charitable sectors (Ball, 2009; Ball and Exley, 2010). During their time in office New

Labour developed its project across social policy. For example, New Labour's agenda evolved to promote 'multi-agency' working across children's and young people's public services, including education through, for example, ECM (DfES, 2004a) and the allied CAF (CWDC, 2007) with their legislative foundations in the Children Act 2004 and foreshadowed in the NA of 2003. ECM and CAF had a focus on the identification of and intervention in the lives of children and families deemed to be 'excluded' economically, socially or in terms of their health and well-being. The instrumentalising of individuals for economic purposes became a central theme in the construction of what it meant to be educated and to be an educator. Particularly under New Labour there was an overt attempt across the public services to produce 'worthy' citizens in a state of 'workforce readiness' (Edwards, 2002; Lakes, 2008), to attempt to responsabilise the dysfunctional to contribute to the economy. Alongside this, the rhetoric of policy now encouraged TAs and teachers to see themselves as members of the children's and young people's workforce and instrumentalised them through the standards agenda of prescribed curricula, pedagogies and 'professionalism'.

In this interpretation ECM and CAF are seen as an example of the state's attempts to 'activate' its otherwise economically unproductive members (Raffo and Gunter, 2008) through the discipline of coordinated, monitored interventions across several public sector sites. Overlaying New Labour's policy moves were the principles of modernisation as applied by the 'competition' or 'managerial' state (Ball, 2008a; Clarke and Newman, 1997; Jessop, 2002) to reconfigure education and its workforce along with other public services (Edwards, 2002). These principles continued to draw on 'rational' business models of management and 'production' but with a new turn that reasserted the importance of the state in enabling further neo-liberalisation (PMSU, 2006, 2007a and b; PSRT, 2006) where New Labour's agenda of modernisation encompassed both the services the state provided along with a reworking of the definition and practice of the state itself (Panitch, 1994) to facilitate the involvement of the public, private, voluntary and philanthropic

sectors in the provision of services and, in the case of the last three, to gain benefits for themselves from the provision of these services (Ball, 2009; Ball and Exely, 2010). Policy rhetoric justified the benefits as also flowing to the state and its citizens through this kind of mixed-market provision. Reading Panitch (1994) might give a more nuanced interpretation as applicable here in that New Labour, perhaps with good social intentions, was looking for ways to make education responsive to the new social and economic conditions and with the continuation of the neo-liberal agenda of providing the infrastructures to support globalised capital through continued re-workings of the division of labour within schools (Rayner and Gunter, 2005). Nevertheless, the approach of New Labour meant that the statist coordination of initiatives took priority over other interests.

Howbeit, the foregrounding of the economic purposes of education as vital to the competitive global success of a nation's workers was one of the persistent and pervasive hallmarks of New Labour policy, as was the interpretation of the global economy as a 'knowledge economy':

Learning is the key to prosperity . . .

(DfEE, 1998a:1)

. . . education is our best economic policy . . . (in) this new economy based on knowledge . . .

(Blair, 2005)

The commodification of knowledge was ideologically and practically linked to the globalisation of capitalism where knowledge and its production were seen as economic commodities to be traded, giving economic advantage to the producers and possessors of knowledge and working from the principle that valuable knowledge is defined as the knowledge that serves the interests of capital³. Panitch's (1994) forthrightly socialist view enables an interpretation of the situation

³ In this context see also CBI (2005) *The Business of Education Improvement*, page 29, and ATL (2010) *England's Schools: Not Open for Business*.

as reflecting capitalism's relentless search for markets and profits through a 'ferocious process of extension and change' with 'profound effects on classes and states' (1994:60) and that neo-liberalisation means states are complicit in allowing the penetration of capitalist interests into their territories, populations and policy making (Chitty, 2009), viz. ECM and CAF.

In terms of a statist, neo-liberal approach to education Michael Barber's *'The Learning Game'* (1996) goes to the heart of New Labour's agenda in providing it with the ideological foundations and vision for policies to provide a responsive and flexible education system, based on the state facilitating a mixed market of inputs from the public, private, charitable and philanthropic spheres. As well as an ideologue, Barber was and is also a significant actor in the state and private spheres⁴. The presentation of his vision for changing education had resonances with Panitch's (1994: 65) discussion of the role of the state in creating the conditions necessary for 'ensuring the availability of key inputs of labour, land, finance, technology and infrastructure'.

Barber (1996:284) felt his proposals could mitigate the effects of global capitalism. He did not question the economic system in its basics, preferring to see his proposals as a way of equipping people to deal productively with inevitable unemployment:

People would not only be in a position to think about constantly, and realise from time to time, their learning needs; they would also have some means of funding further learning – if necessary – during the periods of unemployment which many people, however highly skilled, will find they have to go through.

(Barber, 1996:284)

⁴ Barber worked as Chief Adviser to the Secretary of State for Education on school standards (1997 – 2001), Chief Adviser on delivery to the Prime Minister (2001 – 2005), in management consultancy at McKinsey as expert partner in Global Public Sector Practice from 2005 (Ball, 2008a: 104) and is currently Chief Education Adviser to Pearson Education (<http://www.pearson.com/media-1/announcements/?i=1443> accessed 26 February 2012).

The persistence of his seminal ideas continued to be demonstrated at least until the summer of 2009, some thirteen years after the publication of *'The Learning Game'*. In 2009 the New Labour government under Prime Minister Gordon Brown was guaranteeing training to long-term unemployed young people in the 16 – 24 age range as a way of maximising their potential for employment (BBC, 2009a and b).

Acknowledging what he considered to be the positive effects of the Conservatives' ERA and its aftermath as a 'cultural revolution' (1996:44-49), Barber framed his plans for education reform against a background of 'shocking', 'destabilising' national and global events and moral 'crises' combined with the prospect of an increasingly uncompetitive economy caused by a lack of appropriately numerate, literate and technically/technologically skilled workers (See Annex 1:254). Among Barber's proposals, later adopted as New Labour policy, and which are thus particularly pertinent in relation to this thesis, were the following:

- The Learning Society or Lifelong Learning (LLL) (1996:217, 226, 242, 282 -3 *inter alia*)
- Multi-agency and partnership working (1996: 219) and schools as community learning centres (1996: 258) including the prospect of 'the twenty-four learning hours in the day, for the pupils, for adults and for community organisations' i.e. Lifelong Learning (LLL) (1996:266)
- Nursery provision (i.e. Sure Start and Early Years Professional Status), literacy at primary level, provision of learning resources in disadvantaged homes identified as areas of direst need (1996:298)
- Assessment targets to be pursued with a 'rigour . . . central to the approach' (1996:277) i.e. national key stage testing and targeting
- The wider school workforce remodelling and 'paraprofessionals' (1996:232): TAs and their management by teachers together with proposals for courses to train them and offer the option for them to become teachers (1996:231)

- The wider school workforce and remodelling: use of administrators and paraprofessionals to free up teachers to concentrate on the individual learning process (1996:263 – 264).

From these examples it was evident that Barber was proposing a re-engineering of education to include inter-agency working, workforce remodelling, as well as an intensification of target-setting and monitoring in order to enable the nation to move forward in the face of international economic competition.

The consideration of Barber is important because his proposals were illustrative of how New Labour would attempt ideologically to square the circle of the place of the state (and its education system) in the 'new economy'. Jessop (2002) and Ball (2008a) outlined the emergence and operation of this new conceptualisation of the state. Referring to it as the 'competition' state, the 'managerial' state (see also Clarke and Newman, 1997) or the 'polycentric' state, they characterised the operation of the state as one of creating networks for policy to be shaped and put into practice. Networking ostensibly also enabled responsive and rapid change. However, the networks through which this rapid change occurred required constant monitoring, evaluation and assessment to demonstrate outcomes against standards. Through the foregrounding of the economic imperative, networking also made the public sector both a source of profit for private interests as well as more open to the external influence of private capital interests and supranational networks that included supranational organisations (e.g. the OECD, WTO, World Bank, EU) along with their imported discourses of flexibility and responsiveness (Mahoney *et al.*, 2004; Ball, 2008a and 2009; Ball and Exley, 2010. Indeed Quicke (2003), for example, saw the remodelling policy trajectory as part of an ongoing ideological project to change the structures and agency within schools to conform to managerialist patterns of hierarchy and cost as well as of directed, monitored and assessed work. He interpreted the lack of clarity about TA roles and responsibilities as part of the means by which the ideological project might be realised. In a similar vein, Butt and Gunter (2005:132-133) in their examination of policy, identified points

reflective of neo-liberal ideology and approaches that were attempting to change culture within schools:

- Standards and accountability: there is a national framework to regulate performance which both challenges and secures scrutiny of public sector workers.
- Devolution and delegation: where innovation at local level is allowed and encouraged in resolving issues on the 'front-line'.
- Flexibility and incentives: the relationship between work and the employ/deployment of the workforce in an efficient and effective way challenges traditional contractual and cultural boundaries.
- Expanding choice: there is expanding diversity through types of provision and tackling poor quality service

(Butt and Gunter 2005:132 – 133)

Therefore it could be argued that a combination of market facilitation (that takes from the neo-liberal) coupled with state intervention (that takes from Old Labour) and with the 'turns' here being that all sectors - public, private, voluntary and philanthropic – were considered as part of the market 'mix' of the economy. State intervention therefore no longer meant blanket, all-encompassing state provision but facilitated, monitored and 'quality assured' provision from and to the range of providers in the market 'mix'. Schools were marketised to parents and pupils through the provision of performance data: education was marketised nationally and internationally both as a provider of tradable commodities and as a site for private investment and profit. Workers within schools (including children) worked according to monitored and measured prescriptions of knowledge.

The National Agreement

The NA (ATL *et al.*, 2003) was principally a teacher-focused reform concerned with ‘remodelling’ and ‘modernising’ the school workforce. As already indicated, the remodelling and modernising agenda was a reaction to concerns about problems with the recruitment and retention of sufficient numbers of qualified teachers (see for example: Dixon, 2003; Butt and Lance, 2005; Yarker, 2005; Galton and MacBeath, 2010). It was presented as a means of enabling teachers and school managers to maintain and redouble their efforts and commitment to ‘raise standards’ in education, whilst easing the non-teaching workload of teachers (DfES, 2002:19) through growing the numbers of all school support staff or ‘the wider school workforce’. The compass of the wider school workforce can be seen in Blatchford *et al.*’s (2009b:15) use of the categories of ‘TA equivalent, pupil welfare, technicians, other pupil support, facilities, administrative, site’ in reporting their research. Indeed, the numbers of support staff grew as a result of the NA⁵ over time with full-time equivalent (FTE) TA numbers going from 70,300 in 1999 to 178,900 in 2009 (DCSF, 2009a) and with FTE TA numbers showing the most marked increase in numbers of all support staff categories (Annex 2:258).

Perhaps drawing on Barber (1996) as a materially and ideologically ‘productive text’ (Jones, 1998:36), the rhetoric behind the NA justified reform against a background of intensifying international economic competition, dwindling national competitiveness, an increasingly aware and expectant populace of citizens and children and adults often cast in the role of consumers, significant ‘gaps’ in educational attainment when compared with other advanced economies, and, thus, the need for ever better-qualified school leavers (ATL *et al.*, 2003:1; DfES, 2002a:9-10). Tellingly, Dixon (2003) pointed out that some teachers were leaving the profession in order to become TAs.

⁵ For fuller figures on the increases in all support staff numbers see Blatchford *et al.*, 2009b:20

The NA (ATL *et al.*, 2003) affirmed the pedagogic centrality of qualified teachers on the basis of their knowledge and training. Indeed, many of the tasks subsequently delegated to the 'wider school workforce', such as collecting money, collating progress reports and chasing absences, were self-evidently not pedagogical. However, the NA also stated that implementing the reforms would involve 'pushing back the boundaries of what assistants can do in classrooms' (ATL *et al.*, 2003:12) and thus simultaneously compromised the centrality of the teacher as pedagogue and led to perceptions of de-professionalisation. The NA attempted to indicate a broad remit for teachers as responsible for learning and pupil 'outcomes' along with a list of non-pedagogical tasks which qualified teachers should not do⁶, and coupled this with 'pushing back the boundaries of what assistants' would do. It thus sowed the seeds for further policy work and for the subsequent political, professional and academic debates, as well as for the every-day routines and experiences with their attendant tensions, dilemmas and compromises for the TAs in this study.

At the heart of these debates, dilemmas, tensions and compromises were questions around what kind of an act or interaction constitutes a pedagogical act (Thompson, 2006), around who has 'permission' to be a pedagogue, and around the qualifications, training and education of people to be entrusted as pedagogues. Running through these themes was the connected debate around the appropriate professional relationships between teachers, TAs and school leaders/managers. Groom (2006), for example, argued the need for the effective leadership and management of the inclusion and deployment of TAs where policy realisation and development were concerned. At the core of all these matters, then, are issues of knowledge, power and the positioning of people, including children and young people, within schools and in relation to the national system of education.

⁶ See Annex 3:259 for a list of 'proscribed' teacher tasks and an outline of the support staff reform.

Discourses of prescribing, measuring, performing and knowing: standards in education

The application of the notion of 'standards' to the work of educators and children formed an important plank of New Labour's modernisation policy and had its origins in the previous Conservative period. The use of 'standards' as enforceable 'professional' competences, or as levels of attainment against prescribed curricular inputs, function as disciplinary tools (Foucault, 1977 and 1979) of compliance and as the exercise of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1979 and 1988b) on individuals to learn ways of being and performing (Edwards, 2002), to attempt to normativise their actions through adherence to a canon of acceptable, powerful and officially recognised knowledge.

In the first place, New Labour developed the theme of prescription of curricular knowledge established by the Conservative governments' ERA, the Education Act of 1993 and professional knowledge as instigated in the competence standards for qualified teachers. The continuation of the theme of prescription manifested itself in New Labour's 'standards agenda' where 'standards' are the imposition of further measures and indicators for determining the work of teachers, managers, TAs and learners. I also here propose that ECM and CAF provided an example of the extension of the notion of standards when seen in the context of New Labour's statist approach to the reconfiguration of the public sector. ECM and CAF came to be an overarching approach to 'inclusion' and to the use of data for the monitoring, evaluation and prescription of those educational and other social conditions which were deemed to necessitate intervention.

New Labour policy discourse thus used the word 'standards' in at least three separate ways. In the first place, 'standards' featured in the National Curriculum (e.g. QCA, 2007) 'Levels of Attainment'. Each subject or curriculum area had its own specific descriptors of attainment. The measurable attainments of individual pupils expressed as 'levels' were combined to give a

measure of the effectiveness of individual teachers and schools. As the availability of comparative data grew over time, longer term and more specific comparisons within and between schools therefore became possible and a requirement of the inspection regime through Ofsted (Ozga, 2009:154). Teachers and school managers could use the 'levels' for target-setting purposes with individual and groups of pupils.

In the second place the word 'standards' was applied to the prescriptive/descriptive lists of professional and vocational competences for teachers and TAs (TDA, 2007a, b and c). The revision of the teachers' 'standards' in 2007 led to a closer description of the attributes, knowledge and skills required of these groups of education workers when they carried out their roles, as well as to attempts to align the different professional and vocational standards with each other.

The teachers' standards or competences underwent several incarnations under New Labour in 1998, 2002 and 2007. The standards for teachers also became both more policy-inclusive and professionally pervasive. They became more inclusive in the sense that New Labour governments included compliance with other prescriptive policies such as Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004a) and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (DfEE, 1998b and 1999 respectively) (as instigated and subsequently monitored by Barber) in subsequent versions of the standards. The pervasive nature of the standards reached its fullest flowering in the 2007 version (TDA, 2007c) in which the standards were applicable to all classroom teachers at various stages in their careers and formed part of performance management processes. The publication of the 2007 version of the standards for teachers coincided with the publication of the National Occupational Standards for Support Teaching and Learning (TDA, 2007a), the Standards for Higher Level Teaching Assistant Status (TDA, 2007b) and an updated version of the National Curriculum (QCA, 2007).

In the case of teachers, the 'standards' thus came to serve as an assessment tool for gauging the competence of staff at various stages of their career from training onwards. Prospective HLTAs used their standards to 'prove' they were working at level which merited the award of HLTA status⁷. As the measurable outcomes from teachers and learners gained in subtlety and provided comparative data over time (Ozga, 2009:153), their use enabled target-setting to be enhanced and they became part of both the teachers' *modus operandi* and were used as a diagnostic and prognostic tool for individual children's progress as well as a measure of a teacher's and a school's success. Monitoring and evaluation against standards, professional or curricular, were part of the knowledge base of education workers.

The definition of knowledge, be it curricular or professional/vocational, or more widely social together with measurement, monitoring, appraisal and comparison applied to all three uses of the word 'standards' in these contexts. Likewise a principle of normativisation underpinned the uses of the word. On the one hand there was an attempt to normativise pupils as learners through a prescribed curriculum and measurable 'outputs' in terms of individuals' 'levels of attainment'. On the other hand there was an attempt to normativise teachers and TAs as workers as they laboured to meet the prescribed professional or vocational 'standards' and to produce the 'measurable' outcomes from pupils.

School managers in their turn oversaw the processes of normativisation with the external, 'independent' monitoring and judgement of the effectiveness of the individual school and the wider system of schools being undertaken by bodies such as Ofsted. Thus the internal, institutional processes of normativisation and the judgement of Ofsted were successfully operable only within and with reference to the parameters imposed on the networks by policy

⁷ The findings of my research indicated that not all TAs and HLTAs were aware of the 'standards' which applied to their roles. Greatest awareness of the TA and HLTA 'standards' was shown by those research participants who were undertaking Foundation Degrees. See Chapter 5 for more discussion of this finding.

and through the comparison of outcomes by schools, teachers and individual pupils. The prescription, monitoring and comparison of curricular and professional/vocational 'standards' therefore became a 'disciplinary' (Foucault, 1977 and 1979) tool providing self-referential feedback loops whereby all individuals became institutionally and personally responsabilised for achieving and improving outcomes (Edwards, 2002).

In the third use of the word 'standards', ECM and the allied CAF can be viewed in Ball's (2008a:190-191) terms as a 'composite package'. Their composite nature came from their educational aim of giving children a good start in their learning and development, from their health aim and from their aim of providing support and advice to parents. Together ECM and CAF provided a further instance of policy attempts to define and control knowledge. In this case the definition and control of knowledge, whilst remaining inclusive of education, moved out into the wider social context of children and their families, parents and carers, or rather to those children, families, parents and carers deemed to be socially, economically, or intellectually deficient, or deficient where health and well-being were concerned. As with the knowledge contained in the NC, the NA, and the professional and vocational 'standards', policy provided the definition of the kinds of adults and children who fell within the scope of the provision and were therefore deserving of intervention. Provision also included opportunities for the quantification and monitoring of 'levels' or degrees of need and their reporting through statistical information, this time across the public services dealing with children and their families.

Significantly for education workers, ECM and CAF identified the need for interventions in learners' lives where, for example, there was 'disengagement' from education or training, identified special educational needs, or a need to get learners 'ready for employment' and to 'demonstrate enterprising behaviour' (DfES, 2004:40). Other considerations for intervention in families included such matters as judgements on (lack of) a 'decent home(s)', or marginalisation through

'low income' (DfES, 2004:40). Knowledge about the needy therefore rested on what they were judged **not** to have gained from society through their own merit and their own past failures to make the right choices from among society's resources (opportunities) (Edwards, 2002). Lack and need thereby became the fault of individuals rather than a result of an inherently unfair society whose lack of equality and tendency to marginalise had placed families in those disadvantaged positions (Reay, 2008:646).

Ball (2008a) observed that policies such as ECM and CAF were also disciplinary because they had the aim of intervening in 'dysfunctional families'. As indicated above, they had economic aims such as enabling more mothers to return to the workforce. Packaged in the rhetoric of equity and equality, these aims were, however, 'subsumed within other goals and purposes, and policy seeks to address these different goals together' (Ball, 2008a:191). In the examples of ECM and CAF the intervention of the state supported the neo-liberal notions of the economic activation of the individual, the enabling of the enterprising self (Edwards, 2002) through the colonisation of the private and the blurring of the public and private domains.

Children became the raw materials (Mahoney *et al.*, 2004) both for the internal market that enabled the comparison and choice between schools and for the production of saleable education commodities (curriculum packages, pedagogical approaches). They and their families were also the raw materials for the products of New Labour's wider social projects, in national and international markets. This was demonstrated, for example, through the use of statistical information to evidence improvements in numeracy and literacy, and through marketable curriculum packages or pedagogical approaches designed to support the development of 'life-skills' *qua* the neo-liberal values of individualism, self-reliance, autonomy and entrepreneurship (Du Gay, 1996; Hindess, 2000). The social construction of childhood (Kerry, 2005) as representing the contemporary and historical, cultural, moral, political, and economic values of society

therefore took on aspects of compliance, prescription, intervention and subjection to monitoring, and attempts to encourage the adoption of the values outlined above. TAs were positioned alongside teachers to demonstrate how the policy-defined needs of pupils were being met and how the 'desirable' outcomes of education were being fostered in order to economise and 'include' individuals to enable them to enjoy the benefits of society (Raffo and Gunter, 2008:402-403).

Discourses around the division of labour: (de)professionalisation, pedagogy and reform

Yarker (2005:172), in his reflections on the NA, asked: 'Where is the boundary?' A more appropriate question might have been 'Where are the boundaries?' since sections of the literature devoted thousands of words to exploring boundaries and demarcations between TAs, teachers, children and managers.

Some of the literature from the first decade of the twenty-first century discussed 'TA-ness' with a view to showing how TAs could operate effectively (Howes, 2003; Quicke, 2003; Hancock and Eyres, 2004) particularly where 'inclusion', special educational needs (SEN) or the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies (DfEE, 1998b and 1999 respectively) were concerned (see also for example, Groom, 2006; Webster *et al.*, 2010). Equally some of the writers pointed out the inherent encroachment by TAs on areas of work traditionally undertaken by qualified teachers (Watkinson, 2002a and b; Butt and Lance, 2005; Kerry, 2005; Wilkinson, 2005; Woolfson and Truswell, 2005; Groom, 2006; Thompson, 2006; Yarker 2005; Devecchi and Rouse, 2010). Watkinson and Groom, for example, viewed the deployment of well-trained and qualified TAs as beneficial to children and teachers, whereas Thompson, Wilkinson and Yarker viewed the developments as de-professionalising teachers. The various points of view can be seen as reflective of the substantial albeit unfinished re-working of the structural landscape of schools over the previous ten or fifteen years or so. Some evidence for this came, for example, from a

change in position where classroom support workers were seen as a more or less informal and unregulated 'Mums' army' (Ainscow, 2000) or 'paint-pot washers' (Kerry, 2005) who worked in schools on a largely voluntary basis to one where TAs' work was increasingly encroaching on areas traditionally undertaken by teachers such as teaching, planning and assessment (Butt and Lance, 2005; Blatchford *et al.*, 2009b) and covering full classes (Butt and Lance, 2005; Burgess and Shelton Mayes, 2007 and 2009; Hancock *et al.*, 2010; Hammersley-Fletcher and Lowe, 2011). Effectively these developments meant that one no longer needed QTS in order to teach in an English state school (Yarker, 2005:172).

Attempts were made to define the role of the TA. Below are two such categorisations. A cursory reading of the categorisations shows how the work of the TA overlapped with that of the teacher.

Woolfson and Truswell (2005) reported that Classroom Assistants (TAs):

- (a) supported learning on all levels, providing more individual and group work.
- (b) gave support to pupils with challenging behaviour and additional needs.
- (c) developed positive relationships with pupils.
- (d) provided playground and lunch supervision for the children.
- (e) regularly initiated and played games with the children.
- (f) provided accessible, high-quality pastoral care for pupils.
- (g) were a source of emotional support for the pupils.
- (h) used positive behavioural strategies when working with pupils.
- (i) supported the social needs and development of the children.
- (j) became a line of communication for many parents.
- (k) strengthened the home – school link for some families.
- (l) established a range of parent initiatives.
- (m) were part of teamwork within the classrooms.

(Woolfson and Truswell, 2005:71-72)

Kerry (2005) offered the following categorisation. My parentheses show the overlap with Woolfson and Truswell (2005):

Figure 1

Kerry's (2005:377) categorisation of the TA role, showing overlap with Woolfson and Truswell (2005:71-72)

Dogsbody (or Pig ignorant peasant)	A role substantially limited to manual and menial tasks; the archetypal 'washer of paint pots'
Routine administrator/ teacher's PA	The role is to deal with the classroom paperwork, routine functions such as registers, low-level learning-related activities such as putting up displays, and running errands
Factotum	A versatile role carrying out the range of tasks assigned to the teacher's PA, but with a routine requirement to go beyond those roles e.g. by supporting individual pupils, or class visits, minding the class while the teacher goes out of the room, marking work using an answer-book etc. (a, c, m)
Carer/mentor	A support role that may or may not be in a special school environment, whose main concern is with welfare — physical or

	<p>psychological</p> <p>(b, c, f, g, h, i, m)</p>
Behaviour manager	<p>A role involved with behaviour support with an individual or with groups, including monitoring and control, and dealing with parents in issues of pupil behaviour</p> <p>(b, c, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m)</p>
Curriculum supporter	<p>The role is to identify, assemble and prepare curriculum materials and, in some cases, to revise curriculum documents and create new curriculum activities and planning</p> <p>(a, b, m)</p>
Ring-fenced operative	<p>A role requiring specialist training, such as an NNEB qualification, and confined to a specific phase or function in relation to that training</p>
Specialist	<p>The role of a support member such as a foreign language speaker whose job is to act as a bridge between teacher and learner, but whose expertise is in the translation not the learning</p> <p>(a, b, c, m)</p>
Delineated paraprofessional	<p>A role operating in an environment where duties of teacher and support member are tightly codified, and where support and teaching tasks are hermetically sealed into</p>

	separate functions
Teacher support and partial substitute	A role requiring a range of duties on behalf and under the guidance of the teacher: such as supporting the learning of individual pupils, marking, invigilation, substitution for absence, teaching small groups for short periods; without pretensions to 'teaching' 'whole classes' or reliance on trained skills (all – but d and e could arguably fall outside the remit of the qualified teacher or be undertaken voluntarily)
Mobile paraprofessional	Typified by the HLTA, the role requires a trained person who carries out a range of tasks traditionally associated with teaching, including teaching classes under supervision, against a background of professional training to a level below QTS (all – but d and e could arguably fall outside the remit of the qualified teacher or be undertaken voluntarily)

Amplifying and extending the themes outlined in the above paragraphs, a number of writers concerned themselves with continuing a discourse about the division of labour between teachers and TAs, sometimes searching for ways to achieve, justify or propose distinctiveness between the two parties. In some cases these discussions involved comparisons between relationships and

practices of teachers and TAs, and teachers and trainee teachers (Collins and Simco, 2006), or their discourse was around master/servant or expert/novice relationships and distinctions (Quicke, 2003). An alternative slant on this kind of argument came from Edmond (2003) whose research into the higher education experiences of TAs revealed the tensions that might occur between teachers and TAs, in hierarchical relations, where the latter had had access to more up-to-date theories and approaches to classroom practice, or who might be more reflective about their practice than their senior teacher colleagues.

In a further contribution to the debate around the division of labour, Bach *et al.* (2006:18) reported the opinions of teachers in relation to TAs. Teachers valued TAs who were 'flexible' and 'committed', whilst being opposed to leaving a TA in charge of a class of pupils. Bach *et al.* also highlighted another ambiguous aspect of the NA, namely teachers as untrained managers of TAs. Here therefore was an emerging discourse of the distinctiveness of teachers as those in charge of full classes of pupils, alongside hierarchical relationships supporting the potential development of managerial practices of teachers in relation to TAs (Wilson and Bedford, 2008:149).

Quicke (2003), Kerry (2005), Bach *et al.* (2006), Blatchford *et al.* (2009a and b), Hutchings *et al.* (2009a and b), Devecchi and Rouse (2010) added a further dimension to the discourse around roles, remits and job boundaries. They highlighted how the development of relations and practices of TAs and teachers had been piecemeal, fragmented and localised when the NA and other policy initiatives such as the 'Standards Agenda' and ECM (DfES, 2004a) were being implemented. The availability of increasing numbers of TAs, ostensibly to relieve the burden on teachers, in fact gave school managers a way of coping with other policy initiatives and led to further conflation of teacher/TA roles.

The tone of this aspect of the literature was therefore an attempt to identify boundaries of appropriateness for the work and relations of the two groups. At the same time, the same literature often either started from or concluded with an acknowledgement that the work of the two groups of workers overlapped and led to a blurring of roles. The tension in the literature reflected the tension in practice in schools where teachers were ostensibly the senior members in the relationship and where the TAs, as junior members, were increasingly carrying out the work of the senior. The NA also did more than privilege teachers as the ones in charge of teaching and learning, it endowed them with a senior and hierarchically superior role which could cause tensions and ambiguities if TAs were better trained, educated or more reflective in their practice than their allocated teacher(s) or wherever TAs undertook direct interactions with pupils. The literature also exposed a mismatch between policy-conceived roles and the evolution of those roles in schools as schools attempted to respond to the policy demands from the government.

Imbricated within these discussions of role boundaries were also caveats about the potentially ineffective or negative aspects of TAs' work with children, with Yarker (2005) citing evidence that showed using TAs to deliver the National Numeracy Strategy (DfEE, 1999) had not improved standards. In the same year Woolfson and Truswell (2005) gave evidence of local variabilities in the effectiveness of TAs in raising pupils' attainment with the best results coming from schools where TAs were included in staff professional development, planning and evaluation processes. As early as 2003 Howes had raised the issue of the potential marginalisation of pupils through isolated and uncoordinated support from TAs and irregular contact with their peers and teachers. The themes of variability, training and development, and inclusion of TAs in school planning and evaluation processes were persistent themes in the literature and featured in Blatchford *et al.*'s (2009b) research findings as did evidence of the pupils with greatest need being taught by the least qualified i.e. by TAs. Needless to say, at the level of policy realisation, TAs appeared to be crucial in enabling schools to 'remodel' their workforces (Bach *et al*, 2006; Stevenson, 2007) with

the corollary of this remodelling being the existence of a large number of less well-qualified teaching staff who were cheaper to employ (Quicke, 2003:72) and easier to dismiss.

Three writers, McGregor (2004b), Petrie (2005) and Gunter (2008), argue from alternative perspectives with regard to the division of labour. In different ways their views were grounded in an acknowledgement of what people do as opposed to policy attempts to determine, define and attach relative value to what they do. If pedagogy is regarded as an 'ongoing and collective achievement' (McGregor, 2004b:351), then it is the achievement of a network rather than of an individual. This approach overcomes the attempted binary separation of teachers and TAs where policy regards teaching as a 'property (if not innate quality) of individual teachers' (McGregor, 2004b:349) and which places other people – TAs, children, parents – along with material objects and technology in a 'separate realm of resource management' (2004b:349). Petrie (2005) presented a similar argument about the collaborative nature of pedagogy but with reference to the European understanding of the concept. Under the European model all who are involved in the education of children in its widest sense are considered as pedagogues. Adopting the European understanding might thus overcome a definition of pedagogy limited to the actions and interactions of qualified teachers with pupils. Petrie (2005) advanced the view that the privileging of the qualified teacher as pedagogue in the NA effectively silenced the re-examination of the English understanding of pedagogy.

Gunter (2008:264) took practice in classrooms as a starting point to argue both the impossibility of separating the roles of teachers and TAs as well as the impossibility of expecting teachers to delegate to others such humane interactions and instincts as caring for children. Gunter's article (2008), which examined school workforce remodelling, provides a link to the next theme in the discussion, namely the positioning of TAs and teachers within a discourse of leadership and management of schools dominated by considerations of cost and efficiency rather than those of

the 'messiness and indeterminacy' (2008:264) of the subtle relationships and practices in classrooms and schools. The theme of the economic and efficient leadership and management of the school workforce can thus be interpreted as a further subtheme of the division of labour within the school workforce.

Discourses around the division of labour: the leadership and management of TAs and teachers

In the chronological examination of policy I demonstrated how the policy-determined approach to the leadership and management of teachers had resulted in the naturalisation of a culture of managerialism (*inter alia* Clarke and Newman, 1998; Gunter, 2005; Rayner and Gunter, 2005; Devecchi and Rouse, 2010) and performativity (*inter alia* Ball, 2003). Considerable policy work and on-the-ground 'rationalisation' had, for example, been invested in teachers' job specification through the implementation and mediation of the various versions of the teaching competences or 'standards' (for example, DfEE, 1998c; TDA, 2007c) and the allied regulatory and monitoring mechanisms of performance management and Ofsted inspection regime to bring this about.

In this cultural context, the NA can be seen as having contributed to the policy discourse about the practices of leading and managing TAs and teachers. The Agreement represented modernised and remodelled school staffing structures and relationships as hierarchical and 'rational'. School leaders could be seen as being at the apex of a hierarchy triangle, responsible for ensuring that all staff would be focused on the continued improvement of standards of pupils' attainment. The construction of the hierarchy included a notion of devolved or distributed leadership to lower levels (Gunter, 2005; Rayner and Gunter, 2005; Raffo and Gunter, 2008; Hartley, 2009). As I have shown elsewhere above, TAs were cast in roles of 'junior partners' (Smyth and Gunter in Chapman and Gunter, 2009:193), or 'servants' (Quicke, 2003) and 'apprentices' (Devecchi and Rouse, 2010) in relation to qualified teachers with their own sets of vocational standards (latterly TDA, 2007a and b respectively).

Placing TAs as subordinates meant that teachers would, even if by default, be responsible for leading and managing them (Howes, 2003) resulting in a new role for teachers (Bach *et al.*, 2006) requiring training to enable them to carry out this new role (Wilson and Bedford, 2008). Indeed, even though the idea of appropriateness where the management of TAs was concerned had been left vague in the NA, which stated that teachers would not have direct line-management responsibility for the TAs with whom they worked (ATL *et al.*, 2003:12), a fuller realisation of the 'rationalising' and definition of roles and remits led to the junior role of TAs being further enshrined in the *Professional Standards for Teachers* (TDA, 2007c). In this document part of a teacher's role included the coordination of members of teams of adults 'where appropriate' (2007c:21).

Understandably, some (for example, Hutchings, 2010:112) have argued that the promotion of such a relationship could have built on and extended the existing hierarchical structures and networks in schools and 'rationalist' specifications of teachers' roles through sets of 'standards' or competences as they had gradually developed and become naturalised. From the outset the model for the remodelled workforce contained this in-built fault-line of TA-teacher collaboration and cooperation without direct accountability to teachers. It was around this fault-line that aspects of the literature discussed the development of relations and practices to include teachers' appropriate management and leadership of TAs. One aspect of this debate included the facilitation of the appropriate development and training of TAs (for example, Wilson and Bedford, 2008:149). Another theme concerned the establishment of 'inclusive' 'cultures of learning' (Simkins *et al.*, 2009) with the 'common purpose' (Hartley, 2009) of fostering the mutual development of TAs, teachers and children.

However, the same writers also recognised how the preceding and concurrent reforms of education had given managerialist and performative discourses hegemonic pre-eminence in the management and leadership of teachers. This hegemony also included the valorisation of particular kinds of knowledge and particular relations of power (Gunter, 2008; Hartley, 2009) in the 'culture of learning' both between the policy centre and schools, and between staff within schools. School managers' central concern was to conform to and comply with policy requirements (Hammersley-Fletcher and Atkinson, 2009:194; Hutchings *et al.*, 2009a and b) and they were often effectively silenced by the policy hegemony (Yarker, 2005).

The model of managerialist and performative management and leadership was one typified by a concern for targets, accountability and the measurable outcomes provided by the attainment of pupils against externally (politically) 'constructed and assessed performance programmes' (Gunter, 2005:182) as the knowledge that matters (Gunter, 2008). The distribution and delegation of management and leadership down the school hierarchy was therefore a distribution of the drive for the production of those measurable outcomes which 'proved' a school was 'successful'. The impact of this on TAs could be seen as part of the 'creation and sustaining of organisational arrangements' to achieve this 'success' and positioned them alongside other resources to be managed (McGregor, 2004b). Such an interpretation led Gunter (2008) to report a perception among managers that the outcomes of the process mattered more than the process itself. Rayner and Gunter (2005), in their discussion of the Pathfinder⁸ project, gave evidence of the subversion of this dominant model by headteachers in some schools. Equally, the subversion of the dominant might be tempered or reversed when Ofsted inspectors turned their gaze on those schools (see also Hammersley-Fletcher and Atkinson, 2009:194).

⁸ The Transforming the School Workforce Pathfinder Project (DfES, 2002a) involved 32 pilot schools in the deployment of strategies and resources to remodel / modernise their workforces to inform the national roll out of workforce remodelling. However, the NA was signed and the national roll-out began before the Pathfinder Project was completed.

The distributive drive downwards through the school hierarchy of the knowledge that matters undermined more collegial and democratic ways of working and headteachers delivered policy under the guise of leadership (Gunter, 2008). Taken together the 'positivist epistemology' (Gunter and Thomson, 2007:27) of targets, accountability, and measurable outcomes supported by the application of policy-promoted notions of distributed leadership led to a re-fashioning of education values and norms (Edwards, 2002) as teachers came to discipline themselves (Foucault, 1977 and 1988b; Rose, 1989 and 1996; Edwards, 2002; Miller and Rose, 2008) through exposure to hierarchical supervision, examination and accountability (Perryman, 2009). Within its scope the refashioning of organisational values and norms included the labour of children and young people in classrooms as well as those who supported their learning in a 'plan-deliver-test-report' model of education (Howes, 2003:148).

Conclusion

The period following ERA saw the wresting of the control of curricular and professional knowledge away from the profession and the ratcheting up of pressure on teachers and schools to perform. This led to the policy response of the NA as there were no longer enough teachers to service schools. Nor was there the political will to increase resources and develop the conditions to attract and retain sufficient numbers of suitably qualified teachers (Ball, 2008a). By the time the NA instigated the remodelling and modernisation of the school workforce not only was the knowledge controlled from the outside but its assessment and monitoring were also externally determined and enforceable, effectively removing 'from the teacher the responsibility for designing the curriculum and exercising professional judgement on standards' (Gunter, 2008:259) and robbing them of the ability to innovate in their practice (Regan, 2007). Simultaneously prescribed teaching methods such as those promoted by the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (DfEE, 1998b and 1999 respectively) opened the way for non-qualified staff to

undertake teaching. Gunter (2008:266) called the discourse around teacher professionalism and pedagogy a 'distraction' perhaps because the underlying purpose of the remodelling and modernisation reform was to produce cheap⁹ and flexible labour to undertake teaching (see also Quicke, 2003; Butt and Gunter, 2005; Butt and Lance, 2005).

Staff, whether teachers or TAs, were thus instrumentalised into 'performing' an 'education' centred on prescription, functionality and quantifiability. Managers were responsible for ensuring the functional and quantifiable outcomes of staff and pupils' work; teachers performed specified roles in relation to children and other adults; TAs undertook specified work in relation to children and teachers. The knowledge that mattered was the measurable outcomes of children's work.

Nevertheless, these new ways of working, of structuring the school workforce and of attempting to determine the agency of the members of the workforce to validate the knowledge that mattered created tensions (Butt and Lance, 2005) not around the 'what and how' of pedagogy but around the 'who' in the classroom (Galton and MacBeath, 2010).

The wresting and controlling of authoritative knowledge – the knowledge that mattered - was a major recurrent theme in this current chapter, leading me to postulate an understanding of the promotion of a policy-determined construction of education reform as promoting an equally authoritative discourse about the construction of education more generally within wider public sector reforms through neo-liberal interpretations of the role of the state and the positioning of its citizens. Through an examination of some of the literature I have here attempted to demonstrate that the authoritative discourses of the NA and other policies resulted in ruptures and discontinuities. On the one hand policy makers were using the policies as resources for the establishment of a 'grand' or meta-narrative of education and the state. On the other hand,

⁹ See Annex 4:265 for tables showing the comparative salaries of TAs and qualified teachers.

social relations and practices in schools did not match the policy narrative. Equally the literature was useful in exploring how policy language sought to justify or obfuscate interests that see education as a private good, a tradable commodity or as instrumentalising the production of free labour. Moreover, underlying the meta-narrative of schools as homogeneous institutions, the findings of the literature, regardless of their degree of criticality, all attested a system that is not homogeneous.

Contrariwise, the same policy metanarrative of education also promoted a form of heterogeneity such as marketised provision, or variety in the workforce supporting children, or an acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of pupils' 'needs'. However, these heterogeneities are policy-conformist heterogeneities of permitted and recognised difference, justifications of particular heterogeneities which are, nevertheless, by and large accepted by and acceptable to most people most of the time. The meta-narrative attempts to remove traces of other competing narratives such as: education as a public good which is rewritten as education for individualised consumption or private gain; the tradition of liberal education which is rewritten as education to equip individuals for working life; the meta-narrative of the professional as independent and autonomous which is re-written as a story of unaccountable, self-serving elites. Over the period of the review of education reform one might therefore single out another important feature of the meta-narrative, namely the insertion of new values and norms into the social and material fabric of schools, into the individuals who labour in them and into the resources they deploy and create.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and Methodological Approach

Introduction

Chapter 2 involved an exploration of the historical, ideological and policy contexts which have influenced the development of education, schools and their workforce through the recent past.

My contention was that such an exploration was necessary in order to give a sense of the temporal location of the participants in my research and, to support that view, my work drew on selections from the literature which discussed the historical development of the school workforce, responded or contributed to policy from research findings, or engaged critically with developments in policy and their social effects. In this chapter I take a relativist and constructivist approach to continue my theme of enabling the 'location' of my participants in order to establish a theoretical space for the discussion and description of my research tools in the next chapter.

Building on my discussion of the purposes of my research in the introduction to this thesis I here aim:

- to develop an interpretivist theoretical framework based around social constructivism and meaning making (Bruner, 1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995), Actor Network Theory (*inter alia* Latour, 1987, 2005), and critical language analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Fairclough, 2001) to overcome the separation of macro and micro-level analysis and interpretation and the dissolution of traditional binary oppositions and hierarchies of structure and agency.

Underlying the contextual approach outlined above are allied assumptions that the past in terms of the changes brought about through ERA in reaction to the post-war settlement of education and subsequent policy realignments in the period following the NA contributes to the construction of the present. Therefore the participants in my research are not 'immune' or

‘isolated’ from that past. Indeed, TAs as an identifiable yet difficult-to-define and mutating group of workers in schools, exist because of past events. My interpretation of the literature and policy attempted to show that policy and policy-determined practice in schools had resulted in incomplete and ambiguous realignments in the division of labour and relations of power through policy-determined definitions of knowledge. The lack of easy identification, definition and on-going mutation of TAs thus occur because of events in the past and attempts in the present to mediate or resolve the ruptures and contradictions of past events. The inference is that the words of my research participants will show ‘traces’ of the past in their discussions of current social conditions, relations and practices.

These contentions and propositions have implications for the theoretical and methodological approach that I adopt in this chapter. The idea of the constructive effects of the past on the present leads me to follow a constructivist path in relation to the theorisation of the location of my participants within schools as research sites as well as of my participants as knowledgeable subjects and agents within those sites. *De facto*, we exist - we are, we do, we know, we communicate. My concern in this chapter therefore is to establish theoretical frameworks drawing on a complementary range of theorists whose ideas support my project of situating my research participants within their schools as sites of social interest, of enabling an interpretation and analysis of their words, and of enabling me to contribute to knowledge about the social.

In this chapter, therefore, I present my theorisation of the research sites taking ideas from Actor-Network-Theories (ANT) (*inter alia* Latour, 1987, 2005; McGregor, 2004a, b, and c). I then attempt to theorise my participants as knowledgeable subjects and agents, drawing on ideas on meaning making (Bruner, 1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Synnowich 1995). These approaches are intended to facilitate an understanding of the interaction between subjects and objects within the social and material world. Finally I present some ideas on the centrality of language (Gramsci,

1971; Bruner, 1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995; Fairclough, 2001; Potter and Wetherell, 1987) as a framework for gaining insights into how my participants construct and ideologise their understanding of their working lives and environments. Through taking a constructivist stance I present the subject as agent constituted through action and interaction with other subjects and the material world.

The contribution of Actor-Network-Theory (ANT)

Latour's theory is relativist (2005:12). He maintains that a relativist approach enables a response to accelerated social and technological change. His critique of modernist, 'pre-relativist' (2005:12) sociological thinking and discourse shares many features with post-structuralist criticisms of modernist grand narratives:

Textbooks in sociology are organised around various topics – family, institution, nation-states, markets, health, deviance, and so on – which represent the slowly revisable outcome of the many decisions made by social scientists on what the right ingredients of the social world should be.

(Latour, 2005:174)

Latour (2005:56) urges analysts to 'engage in the world-making activities of those they study' – a principle which resonates with some of my other chosen theorists (e.g. Gramsci, 1971; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Bruner, 1990, 1991; Fairclough, 2001). Therefore, in an attempt to stay true to my constructivist intentions to allow my research participants¹⁰ to speak for themselves without shoe-horning them into some previously decided modernist schema, I draw on ANT as enabling a theorisation of the locations of the participants in this research. The primary source data for this

¹⁰ In the context of ANT, the word 'participants' needs some clarification since the strictest adherence to an ANT approach would mean that all people, places, events and objects could potentially be considered as participants in the sense of their being parts of the assemblages of actor-networks. I therefore limit my use of the word 'participants' to those TAs whom I met in face-to-face interviews and focus groups, or who have provided their own written texts for inclusion in this research.

research was generated by TAs working in schools in England. I am advancing a view that ANT offers a theoretical tool to handle the complexity of relations imbricated in the previous sentence and, by extension, in the data provided by the participants in this research. Further, I also maintain that ANT offers a theoretical tool for overcoming potentially common-sense, unquestioned assumptions (doxa) about hierarchies of scale or power implicit in that sentence – i.e. England at the top, schools in the middle, and TAs at the bottom. I trust my project is in good company as others (for example, Popkewitz, 1996; Nespor, 1994 and 2003; Edwards 2002; McGregor, 2004b and c; Fenwick 2010) have drawn on ANT to explore the relationships between networks concerned with developing and implementing education reform and the (re)positioning of actors within those networks.

Latour defines an actor-network thus:

The first part (the actor) reveals the narrow space in which all of the grandiose ingredients of the world begin to be hatched; the second part (the network) may explain through which vehicles, which traces, which trails, which types of information, the world is being brought *inside* those places and then, after having been transformed there, are being pumped back *out* of its narrow walls.

(2005:179)

In this quotation Latour acknowledges the internality and externality of the social and interprets it as an assemblage of actors effecting transformation of aspects of the world. On the one hand, my support for ANT results from my understanding of it as a tool to examine the aspects of the material and social world that influence and are influenced by the participants in my research. Further support comes from ANT's relativist standpoint to include the shifting material and temporal aspects of the world in the definition of the social.

On the other hand, however, Latour's treatment of the material promotes a view of objects as agents in the sense of 'any thing that does modify the state of affairs' (2005:70). Apart from features of the natural world such as climate, topography, natural disasters, the availability of natural resources, and the availability of food sources, all of which can limit or challenge human action, I take issue with Latour on this view of the material. My interpretation of material objects is one that sees them as having a social effect as a result of their creation, deployment or destruction by human agents in order to cause others to act or as a result of the actions of others. Objects do not have agency in themselves: human agents mobilise combinations of natural, material, temporal, spatial and human resources in particular ways for particular purposes to support particular types of human agency. This mobilisation of resources is an individual's agency or the effect of a network to mobilise other individuals, networks or resources to cause a modification in a state of affairs (Latour, 2005:70) – i.e. to use power (Paechter, 2004b:468).

Building on this background, I chose to employ ideas from ANT for two reasons, both of which are intended as a clarificatory reaction against aspects of often encountered current thinking. Firstly, populist liberal political and economic discourses often promote the idea of networks as empowering of workers. Hartley (2008:704) suggests that networking is here being appropriated as propaganda to disguise the maximisation of profits through the flexibilisation of the workforce. By the same token, it is possible to apply a similar reading of networks to the policy-conditioned aspects of the relations between TAs, teachers, managers and children as they labour to maximise the measurable outputs of education. Here the policy rhetoric employed encouraged education workers to interpret the networks as neutral, primarily supportive of children, and as improving working conditions for qualified teachers. However, in the discussion in the previous chapter, I advanced a view that the issues raised in the literature might lead one to a conclusion that practices and relations in schools can be interpreted as exploitative of children and TAs and as undermining the status of teachers.

Moreover, the 'official' recognition of TAs as a group of education workers through the NA, as well as the promotion of hierarchical management in schools, indicated shifting and developing groupings within schools. One interpretation could be that policies such as the NA and ECM made certain groupings visible and led to the performance of certain types of agency in schools which according to ANT will generate data about controversies affecting those groups and are therefore of interest to the enquirer (Latour, 2005:30). Through the review of policy and literature I showed how, over time, these groups were made and remade through various policy initiatives such as the Children Act 2004, CAF, ECM, suggesting a concurrence with Latour (2005:34) of a definition of agency as performative and responsive to influences imported from other networks. Latour (2005:34) goes on to argue that, once the performance stops, the agency vanishes, and the role for the actor no longer exists. In other words the performance of agency continues as long as it is needed and develops in response to the requirements, prompts and suggestions of the self and others in order to make the performance relevant to the situation in hand (Latour, 2005:37).

The second reason for taking ideas from ANT originates in a personal intellectual 'tussle' with aspects of macro- and micro-level sociological theorising, particularly in relation to structure and agency and in their relation to the context of this thesis which apparently embraces the national macro level of policy as well as the micro level of individual schools, and indeed the 'ultra' micro level of the individual as subject and agent. Latour's words resonated with my thinking about the macro-micro debate:

It (ANT) makes the assumption that the avoidance reflex instantiated twice by sociologists – from the local to the global and from the macro back to the micro – is not the mark of some infamous weakness on their part, but a very important sign that these sites are the shadow image of some entirely different phenomenon.

(2005:169-170)

Latour's response to this differentiation advocates keeping the social 'flat' (2005:176) through avoiding jumping from the local to the global, focussing instead on the types of connections that link sites (2005:179) and the commonalities in connections between one site and several other sites (2005:176). Following a 'structural' as opposed to a 'network' theorisation can entrain insoluble oppositional binaries between the macro and micro which potentially involve the unintended privileging of one group of agents at the expense, or to the disadvantage or obfuscation of another. Indeed my initial struggle with the macro-micro question was leading me to privilege policy and policy makers because of a common-sense, doxic way of visualising structures. The visualisation hierarchically stratified schools as sitting 'under' the relevant government department, with teachers, TAs and other members of the workforce as sitting 'under' the schools. My engagement with policy, the related literature and ideas from ANT indicated that such a common-sense and apparently accurately imagined construction of the education system resulted from the power effects of the discourse set up by policy – i.e. the application, control and monitoring of the knowledge that matters or counts. Overcoming such a view then prevents the privileging of one site over another.

Through an ANT perspective, shaped by the research and ideas of McGregor (2004b), Latour (1997 and 2005), Philo and Parr (2000), Tooke (2000), Clarke *et al.* (2002) Massey (1994, 1999) and Layder (1997), an 'institution' would be an instance of a 'jump' to a macro-level. ANT theorists would interpret 'institutions' as social and material sites constituted from interconnecting or non-interconnecting networks of individuals and groups of people through time and space who draw on and mobilise the resources available to them to assemble, stabilise and calibrate the 'institution'. Across time and space the interconnections between groups and individuals change contingently and the 'institution' changes. Within institutions are physical spaces and places at the disposal of the groups and individuals and where social interaction takes place.

A further reason for deploying ideas from ANT resulted directly from my critical and reflective engagement with policy and literature. The policy trends seen in ERA, NA and New Labour's wider social project including ECM and CAF all influenced the understandings and actions of individuals and groups within schools. Indeed, I advanced a view that the NA could be interpreted as an attempt to stabilise relationships between teachers, TAs, managers and children and to instigate new structures within schools. However, theorising TAs as a new structure does not adequately reflect the contingent, local and contradictory aspects of the venture because the literature attests both the erosion of the traditional work of teachers and the intrusion of the work of the TA into those traditionally professional areas as well as local adaptations to the change. For me therefore, a structural approach is not suited to this particular context since structure suggests something more monolithic, socially generalised and quasi-permanent, something more suited to a macro-level examination and explication of the situation(s). ANT on the other hand encourages the researcher to look for the fluidity and contingency of networks as 'precarious accomplishments' (Philo and Parr, 2000:517). The influences of ERA, the Education Act of 1992, the NA, ECM and CAF can, for example, be seen as attempts to link networks together both in terms of what would otherwise be unconnected networks of politics and schools as well as in terms of establishing semblances of commonality between and within schools. The underpinning of the connections through the imposition and operation of modes of monitoring and control through Ofsted and published 'League Tables', for example, 'cement' the 'fix' through instantiating asymmetrical relations of power within and between the actor-networks and provide vehicles, traces, trails, and information about the world being brought into the schools (Latour, 2005:179).

Latour contends that 'objects have to enter accounts' (2005:79) as 'immutable and combinable mobiles' (1987:227). Indeed, objects do enter into this account through my references to various

policy documents and findings from the literature. In Latour's account, objects' mobility and immutability stem from their transferability through space and time to different sites in unaltered form. Objects are combinable in the sense that an agent can bring the 'mobiles' together to create a network of humans and objects as an 'assemblage' (2005:7) to stabilize or bring order into the social and to create new mobiles.

However, and bearing in mind Latour's (2005) foregrounding of networks' local contingency and fluidity, networks within different sites may use the same immutable mobiles in combination with other mobiles for their own purposes. For example, McGregor (2004b), in her theorisation of teachers and their workplaces, drew on ANT to examine how 'networks of people and things order the spaces of the school' (2004b:347) and affect everyday encounters in schools. McGregor (2004b) examines the science department in a school as an actor network extensive in space-time and overcomes the binary of global versus local. She theorises the interactions of teachers as accomplished in networks of social relations that extend well beyond the school through, for example, the inclusion and deployment of immutable mobiles. Using the National Curriculum document as an example, McGregor's theorisation draws on the spatial and temporal aspects of networking to argue how immutable mobiles can link spatially and temporally distant sites in an attempt to order particular spaces and agencies within schools. McGregor's use of ANT as a theoretical tool enables the inclusion of materiality, space and time where schools are produced in the practices and relations of the individuals who work in them through their interaction with each other and through the contingent deployment of temporal, material and spatial resources.

McGregor's (2004b) work opens the door to the researcher's consideration of the operation of individuals and networks within sites to lead to the identification of similarity and difference between sites. In its turn the approach generates evidence for the consideration of the implications of those similarities and differences together with the effects of the transfer of

immutable mobiles from one network into others. In this context, Fenwick (2010:117) points to the deployment of the immutable mobile as resulting in 'co-existing ontological forms' in the same and in different sites. This line of argument may enable me to account for differences between the focus groups in different schools in the same age-phase sector. Indeed, identifying the links provided by immutable mobiles and examining the features of the local site as described and discussed by the research participants supports the purposes of generating a bona fide and valid account of the experiences of the participants.

ANT is thus useful in providing a theory for the identification of the resources which are at the disposal of agents as they understand and construct their worlds and interact with other agents in those same acts of understanding and construction.

Building on the theme of transfer in 'immutable and combinable mobiles', Latour (2005) employs the word 'circulation' to describe the availability of resources prior to their stabilisation in a location. From Latour's perspective the notion of location is fluid and contingent since different agents bring different interpretations and definitions to bear on the 'local':

. . . places do not make for a good starting point, since every one of them are framed and localized by others . . . Circulation is first, the landscape 'in which' templates and agents of all sorts and colors circulate is second.

(2005:195 – 196)

Beyond this and following Latour's ideas on actor-networks as assemblages, the words of the participants will make 'empirically visible' (2005:82) the objects, symbols, and texts which betray the operation of relations of power to 'authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on' (2005:71), or which also 'account for the durability and extension of any interaction' (2005:72). In this sense Latour's (2005) work opens up opportunities for theorization of relations of power (Foucault, 1977, 2002 *inter alia*).

So far I have presented my preferred theorisation of the 'external' world within which the participants exist, having attempted to move away from the binaries of macro and the micro through a network theorisation. Included in this theorisation was my understanding of the material, spatial and temporal aspects of the social as resources available for the understanding and construction of the world. Policy is one kind of resource that can be 'picked up' by agents to support an understanding and transformation of the world. In effect my theorisation has thus far been limited to the social and material environment. I fear that this runs the risk of not paying due regard to my participants' subjectivity, autonomy and agency, and of reducing them to automata. Therefore I now move to widen the discussion to theorise the individual as a knowledgeable, speaking subject and agent operating and interacting within this environment. This part of my project maintains my constructivist stance as I draw on ideas from Gramsci (1971), Bruner (1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995), Fairclough (2001), and Potter and Wetherell (1987).

Social constructivism and 'meaning making': agency, subjectivity and actor-networks

My intention in the preceding paragraphs on ANT has been to show the inter-connectedness of subjects and objects as a nexus from which individuals cannot extricate themselves. Agency produces a social or material object and which has an effect on the agency and subjectivity of others. Latour (2005) maintains that sociological theory is an example of this interplay between the subject (as theorist or researcher) and her/his social and material world – that is to say, its subjective problematisation, categorisation and interpretation by the sociologist. Hence Latour stresses that '(t)he task of defining and ordering the social should be left to the actors themselves, not taken up by the analyst' (2005:22). Elsewhere he says:

. . . if there is one thing you cannot do in the actor's stead it is to decide where they stand on a scale going from small to big, because at every turn of their many attempts at justifying their behaviour they may suddenly mobilize the whole of

humanity, France, capitalism, and reason while, a minute later, they might settle for a local compromise. Faced with such sudden shifts in scale, the only possible solution is to take the shifting *itself* as . . . data and to see through which practical means 'absolute measure' is made to spread.

(Latour, 2005:184)

Implicit in Latour's thoughts are ideas about the actor/agent as both constructed and constructive, as interacting with and interpreting the world to bring order into her/his world and to justify her/his action. This idea is also supported by, for example, Potter and Wetherell (1987:18) who maintain that individuals are continually striving to make sense of what is going on around and within them. In a similar vein, Bruner (1990:107), taking a constructivist view, maintains that the 'self' is the result of 'participations'. By this he means that the 'self' is formed and continues its ongoing formation through its engagement with the external world composed of other people and their inter-relatedness ('intersubjectivity' Crossley, 1996) in social interactions, relations and practices.

The notion of 'participations' provides an important connection throughout this section on theorising the subject as agent and the external social and material world. I argue that, just as the subject is the result of participations, then so too are the networks the result of participations by subjects. These participations create social and material objects perceived to be external by the subject. To state the obvious then, without human participation and perception networks would not exist and change.

At this point, I part company with Latour because, somewhat unhelpfully, he appears to use the words actor and agent interchangeably and ambiguously (see for example 2005:52, 53, 56, 57, 58, 70), sometimes apparently referring to material objects and at others to people, at still others the distinction is not clear. I find I cannot subscribe to a view that ascribes agency to material objects

to order the world or to justify their 'behaviour' excepting that the ordering and justification have first been instigated by deliberate or accidental human agency. My use of the words 'agent' and 'agency' will therefore refer only to human agents for the clarity and consistency of this thesis. In these paragraphs, then, I am proposing that the subject as agent is knowledgeable and autonomous but that knowledge and autonomy are conditioned and constrained by her/his understanding of the networks which s/he perceives and endows with meaning (after Bruner 1991). One cannot gain knowledge except from one's experience; one can apply one's knowledge only to one's situation, and one can act only according to one's situation. Agency and subjectivity are therefore socially constructed: individuals exercise agency and experience subjectivity with reference to their knowledge of the parameters or permissiveness of the networks within which they operate.

Therefore, for the purposes of this work, I interpret the subject's encounters with social and material objects as processual and perceptual in the creation of the self or the subject. Because these encounters with social and material objects are continual, so is the creation of subjective meaning and the self is therefore in a constant state of creation and 'becoming' (Weedon, 1987). Evidence of subjectivity can be found in these pages through, for example, aspects of the participants' words, the theorists' choice, problematisation, interpretation and theorising about social reality and, equally, through my choice, interpretation and explanation of both of the above.

There are further dimensions to this discussion of the social construction of agency that are worth noting as they offer an enhanced way of examining my data. I have already indicated that time and space are important stabilising features of networks where the subject exists in socially mediated time and space. Through their stabilising, mediation between subjects, time and space, along with 'immutable and combinable mobiles' (Latour, 1987), are resources which are both

socially constructed and socially constructive and provide parameters for existence and action. Thus, as with McGregor's (2004b) science department, the TAs in my research exist in the socially constructed and constructive time and space of schools. Simultaneously the same people also exist in the socially constructed and constructive time and space networks of the 'education system', the economy, the political system, their families, their 'communities'. Because these networks are social constructions they are all fluid, contingent and subject to change as a result of agency and occupy different spaces, following different time trajectories. Logically, therefore, the social only exists and develops within and because of constant, perpetual human thought and (inter)action, or as Latour has it, agency involves 'repairing (the) constantly decaying 'social structure'' (2005:69 – 70).

It may therefore facilitate my argument to postulate that, whilst my data involves texts about social situations relating to TAs 'captured' at particular points in time, these texts are simultaneously temporally (historicised as well as future-postulative) and spatially (re)constructed and (re)constructive. Potter and Wetherell's (1987) and Bruner's (1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995) insights into meaning making from the subject's perspective also imply the subject's 'search' for self-(re)location within these and other networks which are also equally temporally, spatially and socially (re)constructed and (re)constructive. The further implication of this is that the subject's perception of this world provides both the discursive context within which the subject exists as agent as well as discursive resources ('members' resources' = MR, Fairclough, 2001) upon which the subject draws in order to make sense of the world to her/himself and to others: all of which relate back to Latour's (2005:184) ideas on the mobilisation of resources potentially across the widest scale of the social and range of the material.

The trend of the discussion so far has been to put forward ideas on the social construction of subjectivity as the drawing of meaning from the social and material world. The postulation is that subject's action/agency will be conditioned by her/his subjective meaning making. The question is: what characteristics might agency have? Bearing in mind my earlier caveat concerning Latour's (2005) ascription of agency to material objects and thus limiting my tentative definition of an agent to human beings only, Latour (2005) nevertheless proffers some characteristics of agency that serve the purposes of my thesis, marrying with my proposal of a coherent external world stabilised through agents' assemblages of social and material resources, and with my understanding of constructive and constructed subjectivity.

Running through Latour's (2005) characteristics of agency is the idea of 'getting things done' through the effective mobilisation of social and material resources to 'modify a state of affairs' (2005:70). To illustrate Latour's (2005:52) first characteristic of agency as 'doing' I draw on such aspects of agency as the production, mediation and dissemination of documents, teaching children, and participating in meetings to plan or evaluate teaching and learning. Within each of these activities, agents are involved in the mobilisation of material and human resources for purposes particular to each situation. The different agents involved in these activities are positioned in relation to each other and to the material resources. Paechter (2004b:468), commenting on Allen (2003), makes the point that power becomes visible as a result of the effects of such mobilisations of human and material resources - i.e. in its effects as stabilising or transforming the social.

Latour's (2005:53) second feature of agency is its identifiability by research participants: Latour (2005) calls identifiable agency 'figuration'. Under this characteristic an identifiable agent may be an individual, a group of individuals or a combination of individuals and material objects identified by other subjects as making them or others act or preventing action. The mirror of this feature is

‘performative’ agency (2005:56) as agency caused by or in reaction to others’ identified agency. The identification of figurations of the agency of others may include (de)legitimation of that agency, criticism or support. The proposal of theories of action/agency by subjects (2005:57) in response to figurations of agency or in explanation of the subject’s own performative agency links Latour’s ideas on agency to reflexive and reflective subjectivity as developing through engagement with the networks as discussed above.

Finally, Latour (2005:58) embeds agency within his theorisation of actor-networks through agents as ‘concatenations of mediators’, thereby allowing for links between agents. However, he is careful to define his use of the word ‘mediator’ in contrast with his definition of ‘intermediary’. By intermediary Latour (2005:57) means an agent who is part of a chain of cause and effect where the ‘input’ by and through the intermediary determines the ‘outcome’. A mediator, in contrast, (2005:58) is not deterministic. Mediation therefore gives opportunities for unexpected consequences from ‘inputs’ the agents’ use of their own theories of action. According to Latour, mediating agents offer ‘occasions, circumstances and precedents’ (2005:58). Mediation therefore links to my proposition of subjects as agents as knowledgeable and autonomous within the parameters and permissiveness of the networks. The act of mediation provides a further resource on which agents can draw and deploy in their engagement with the social and material world.

That individuals reveal their perceptions of their world through language has been left largely implicit and taken for granted throughout this discussion of meaning making, subjectivity and agency. Potter and Wetherell (1987), Bruner (1990, 1991) and Fairclough (2001) offer language as the main means by which individuals make sense of their world and find their way through it: language is thus a mediatory tool. Linking this to Latour’s ideas on actor-networks and my discussion of subjectivity and agency, such matters as constructing an interpretation of the world,

justifying one's actions, interacting with other people, self-reflection, and mediation are all instances among a myriad of others where the use of language is central to the mobilisation of resources for both agentic and subjective purposes.

The taken-for-granted centrality of language: power and ideology

Subjectivity, agency, the social and the material are all closely linked to the exploitation of language as a resource and to its use as a social practice. In my interpretation of Latour's schema of actor-networks, language can be seen as central to the mobilisation of other network resources including people. Reading Gramsci (1971), Potter and Wetherell (1987), Bruner (1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995), Fairclough (2001) and Latour (2005) I venture that the subject's experience and sense of (re)location and her/his exercise of agency within socially, materially, temporally, spatially conditioned and conditioning networks are expressed through the language s/he uses.

The discursive use of language, for example, provides a resource for describing and analysing external reality individually and collectively as well as for examining and understanding objects within external reality (Gramsci, 1971:444-445). The subject's action will result from her/his meaning-making and the communication of that meaning to and with other individuals and groups.

The use of discursive language involves such activities as narration, interrogation, interpretation, categorisation and the establishment of relational interconnections. Language thus also structures the thoughts of the subject in her/his own understanding of external reality and her/his place within or in relation to that reality. However, the use of language occurs in such a spontaneous and taken-for-granted way (Potter and Wetherell 1987:9) that the subject is rarely conscious of the effects of language on constructing subjectivity or of the expression of the

constructed subjectivity that her/his words betray. Logically then, the utterance and exchange of words between subjects and their consequent actions must alter – however slightly – the actor-networks, as well as occasion and reflect the altered structuring of the subject.

‘Language’ is therefore something of a paradox. On the one hand its production is taken for granted: it is a core feature of being human. On the other hand, language as a resource draws on the other social and material resources in order to ‘make sense’ and to enable humans to take it for granted.

Language, being the pre-eminent means by which individuals negotiate their way through the world, also gives individuals a sense of stability and predictability about their world from knowing that their words will lead to mutual understanding. In producing naturalised language, however, individuals are not merely deploying the structure and content of the language itself but are doing this within particular networks where, through language and/or action, a choice of circulating resources is simultaneously drawn upon. The instance of linguistic production as a naturalised social practice within networks becomes the instance of further naturalising linguistic reproduction within those similarly and simultaneously further naturalised networks. Material and social reality therefore come to be regarded as facts, naturalised and reified in the perceptions and utterances of individuals as taken-for-granted, unquestioned common sense.

Gramsci (1971) questions taken-for-granted aspects of the comprehension and use of language. He opens up the possibility that meaning is not necessarily commonly shared between subjects. Part of discourse may therefore be anything from a search for common meaning, to an attempt to impose common meaning, even to a deliberate or felicitously accidental obfuscation of meaning:

. . . the fact of ‘language’ is in reality a multiplicity of facts more or less organically coherent and coordinated. At the limit it could be said that every speaking being

has a personal language of his own, that is his own particular way of thinking and feeling.

(Gramsci, 1971:349)

Gramsci's thoughts can be related to Latour's construct of actor-networks. Just as language presents a case in point of a taken-for-granted social resource, it also provides an example of the internal taken-for-granted agency on the part of subjects in their dealings with others and with themselves. The reflective and reflexive work the subject undertakes in order to achieve coherence and coordination of the 'facts' of the world and her/his action is part and parcel of involves choosing and mobilising appropriate ideological resources circulating in the network (Latour, 2005) to bring meaning to a situation (Bruner, 1990, 1991). Agency results from the choice and simultaneously reflects the way the subject makes the external 'real', i.e. comprehensible and meaningful in her/his own language, in order to exercise her/his agency contextually and contingently.

The introduction of ideological aspects to subjectivity and agency reflects another use of language which is at once both discursive (Foucault, 1971; Eagleton, 1991) and can also be either taken for granted common-sense doxa (Gramsci, 1971) and banal (Billig *et al.*, 1988) or can reveal fault lines (Fairclough, 2001) in the networks. I am here interpreting 'ideology' as the mobilisation and deployment of ideas as circulating resources to stabilise or disrupt actor-networks. Ideology can thus be found in the 'immutable and combinable mobiles' as resources at the disposal of subjects as agents.

Intimately bound up with my interpretation of ideology as a form of discourse is the notion of 'power' whose cause is the exercise of agency and whose effect is the modification of a state of affairs (Latour, 2005:70). Thus, Eagleton (1991:8), following Foucault (1972), maintains that ideology is a form of discourse involving power struggles and relations at the core of social life. As

a discursive tool ideology might then be seen as ‘the actual uses of language between particular human subjects for the production of specific effects’ (Eagleton, 1991:9). To offer a Latourian interpretation of this: as ideological resources undergo combination by agents as ‘concatenations of mediators’ (Latour, 2005:58) they become productive of other ideologies to be used to justify, explain or prompt particular types of agency, relations and practices within networks. The effect of the mobilisation and deployment of ideological resources through the exercise of agency is power made visible (Paechter, 2004b) in asymmetries of domination and subordination within networks (Latour, 2005:63). On this point Latour and Foucault echo each other: Foucault (1972 *inter alia*) suggests that omnipresent relations of power operate throughout the social body in simultaneously repressive and productive ways.

My interpretation of ideology allows consistency with my earlier decision to follow Latour’s (2005) recommendation to let the participants in the research determine the scale of the resources on which they draw. My position leaves my participants free to ideologise their own positions from the discursive use they make of language to make sense of their world, of creating for themselves ‘calibrated and stabilised forms’ (Latour, 2005:244) even though these forms may be contingent, *ad hoc* and suited to the situation at hand (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). I adopt this approach because many writers from different traditions (Abercrombie *et al.*, 1980; Billig *et al.*, 1988; Eagleton, 1991; Billig, 1995; Fairclough, 2001 *inter alia*) give accounts of the difficulties in defining ‘ideology’ and conclude that ‘ideology’ is therefore often used as one of those ‘catch-all’ words for a writer’s own political, social or ideological purposes. Below I indicate the extremes of scale of the forms of ideology on which my participants may draw.

At one end of the scale is ‘high’ ideology which, for example, presents the goal of a final, generalised, essentialised and normativised view of stabilised human relations. In doing so it may

present aspects of present and past conditions as dystopian with a view to creating a utopian¹¹ future or desired state of affairs. 'High' ideology presents a formalised view of the world constructed by theorists who systematically combine 'facts, interpretations, desires and predictions' (Billig *et al.*, 1988:29-30) resulting in a situation where '(i)deology is conceived to be some sort of giant, socially shared schema, through which the world is experienced.' (Billig *et al.*, 1988:29). Expanding this definition of ideology, some writers introduce notions of power, domination and agency to demonstrate how 'high' ideologies can be seen as metanarratives to maintain, undermine or support power relations between privileged or marginalised classes or groups within society. Eagleton (1991:3-6) explores the idea of dominant and oppositional ideologies, identifying features of ideological discourse that are useful to my subsequent discussions. I list the principal ones here:

- The (de)legitimation of the power of a dominant social group or class
- How meaning is used to sustain or undermine relations of domination
- How beliefs and values are promoted or questioned
- How opposing ideas are denigrated
- How rival forms of thought are either excluded, derided or ignored
- How social reality is represented from the partial, biased point of view of the ideology in question

Billig *et al.* (1988) warn against assuming that formalised, 'high' ideology has the totalising effect of completely colonising individuals' thinking and action. In this context Abercrombie *et al.* (1980:142) suggest that subordinate members of groups need to obey the dominant and perform their roles satisfactorily without internalising the dominant ideology.

¹¹ 'Utopia' – the kind of utopia envisaged will depend on the political, social or economic content of the ideology. Thus an envisioned liberal utopia is different from a socialist utopia or a feminist utopia.

On the other hand, this interpretation of the term 'ideology' does not fully take account of the ways in which people act or explain and discuss how they live their lives through their own ideological understandings of the world. Echoing Latour (2005) on choice of scale residing with participants, Billig *et al.* (1988) offer some useful thoughts here through discussing of the links between formalised ideologies and the individual's 'everyday ideology' or 'lived ideology' as her/his ways of being in the world. To develop their view they elaborate the notion of 'ideological dilemmas' where dilemma is not about a single choice. Rather it is about negotiating one's way through the world in terms of the social situations which pull individuals in different directions and where they encounter conflicting values and challenges.

The characteristics of dilemmas are revealed as fundamentally born out of a culture which produces more than one possible ideal world, more than one hierarchical arrangement of power, value and interest. In this sense social beings are confronted by and deal with dilemmatic situations as a condition of their humanity.

(Billig *et al.*, 1988:163)

The usefulness of this quotation is its acknowledgement of competing forms of 'utopia', of domination and power, the notion of plurality in values and interests together with the idea of choice as an attribute of individual agency. One cannot therefore assume that the dominant ideology is uniformly dominant (or indeed at all dominant). The individual is likely to draw on competing and contradictory ideologies in the shaping of her/his own view of the world and ways of acting in a social reality which is complex. Within this complexity of the social world the dilemmas it creates need to be taken into account. Billig *et al.* go on to say:

This has implications for the image presented both of a person, here regarded from the point of view of a subject capable of argument (indeed dependent on argument), and of a society in which many of the resources for argument are

produced in the complex nature of its demands and opportunities.

(1988:162)

This enables a development in the understanding of the partiality of ideology. Just as high or dominant ideologies draw on resources to justify and advance their case, so individuals in their day-to-day accommodation and shaping of their social reality will draw on a range of ideological resources to enable them to conceptualise that reality and to plan, accomplish and reflect on their actions in the light of their understanding. An ideology can become dominant in a network where it matches the choice of the agents within the network where a 'successful' ideology 'communicate(s) to (its) subjects a version of social reality which is real and recognisable enough not to be simply rejected out of hand (Eagleton, 1991:15). In providing a resource to bring meaning to agents' understandings and inform action within networks, a successful ideology thereby modifies a state of affairs (Latour, 2005:70) such as relations and practices within the networks.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a relativist, constructivist theorisation of the knowledgeable subject as an agent whose autonomy is located in and bounded by a social and material environment. I theorised the social and material environment using ideas from ANT (Latour, 1987 and 2005). Latour's (1987 and 2005) notion of 'immutable and combinable mobiles' as human and material resources on which the subject can draw and which the agent can mobilise presented a theorisation which enabled me to maintain my standpoint of allowing the participants to determine the scale of the resources on which they could draw. Central to my theorisation has been my attempt to highlight the importance of language as a discursive tool for the mobilisation of resources to stabilise the social world. Within my theorisation of language I chose to focus on its ideological aspects, allowing for the revelation of relations and practices of power. My reflections and postulations in this chapter now require frameworks for the

investigation and interrogation of the data provided by my research findings. Ideas from Fairclough (2001), Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Bruner (1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995) will support the provision of this framework.

Chapter 4: Methods

Introduction

The exposition of the methods I employed in my research is central to the purpose of this chapter.

As I stated in the introduction to the thesis, my work centres on a critical examination of the language used by my participants and the influence of 'policy' it contains. This will take the form of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and a 'free' critical language analysis (CLA) (Fairclough, 2001 *inter alia*; Potter and Wetherell, 1987) interpretatively informed by my engagement with and appreciation of the theories discussed in the previous chapter. Through the deployment of the research methods I establish in this chapter I aim to engage with the following purposes of this thesis:

- to give 'voice' to a number of TAs across a small range of educational settings;
- to examine the discourses of my participants for indications of the effect of policy on the shaping of their professional identity, subjectivity and agency;
- to gain insights into where my participants locate themselves in relation to each other and other networks in education;
- to gain insights into how my participants define their roles and how they describe the work they do;
- to identify similarity and variation in the participants' discourse(s) across a small range of educational settings.

My research methods are designed with a view to enabling me to address the following research questions:

How is 'policy' evident in the discourses, descriptions and discussions of my participants? How does 'policy' shape the subjectivity and agency of my participants? Do other factors than policy shape the subjectivity and agency of my participants?

Do the participants' discourses, descriptions and discussions vary between and within sites?

What do the words of the participants reveal about them as knowledgeable subjects and agents, and about the 'educational environments' within which they work? What are the implications of this?

Is there evidence of the operation of relations of power? What are the implications of these relations?

Enquiries and research employing CDA, CLA and the use of focus groups, individual interviews, and primary texts have long and established traditions in the social sciences; my presentation of participant-produced texts therefore is part of this tradition. I am deploying these methods with TAs, a relatively under-represented group of education workers. I develop ideas encountered in the previous chapter from Latour (1987 and 2005), Bruner (1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995) and Said (1984) for this chapter because their ideas complement each other. Latour enables an avoidance of the temptation to proceed to 'gross' interpretation at the 'macro' level through first allowing the participants to determine the scale and source of the resources they draw from their networks and produce for the purposes at hand. Bruner and Said are helpful in viewing text as interpretative of particular aspects of the social, namely the cultural and historical. They also provide insights into the composition of text.

The nature of discourse, the methods I employ to examine the data and the production of my text have ethical implications which I explore in this chapter. In considering the ethical implications of my work I will draw firstly on BERA's (2011) guidelines for ethical educational research, followed by ideas from writers in Denzin and Lincoln's (2008) work *'Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative*

Materials' (notably Chase, 57-94; Fontana and Frey, 115-160; Scheurich and McKenzie, 313-350; Peräkylä, 351-374; Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 375-402), Silverman (2000) and Erben (1998).

The general framework of my method involves seeing the agent's production and interpretation of text (both speech and writing) as social acts and practices (Said, 1984) which draw on resources circulating within actor-networks (Latour, 2005). These resources can be typified as conditioned by and reflective of historical (Fairclough, 2001:127) and cultural conditions (Bruner, 1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995). Reading Bruner and Fairclough alongside each other is an interesting exercise in interpretation which has enabled me to justify my approach in these pages. Bruner (in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995) appears to prefer to use the word 'culture' as conditioning of meaning making whereas Fairclough promotes the idea of using CDA to expose and examine relations of power and underlying ideologies. Both writers discuss the importance of time and space in the development of subjectivity and therefore also resonate with Latour's (2005) notion of the stabilisation of the social through agents assembling resources including immutable mobiles originating in different times and spaces to bring meaning to their current situation. For the sake of this work, therefore, my understanding and use of the terms 'history' and 'culture' also include the notions of ideology and power and their operation as outlined in the previous chapter. From a Latourian perspective 'history', 'culture', and 'ideology' are resources circulating in the networks, providing aspects of scale on which the participant draws. From a CDA/CLA perspective, 'readings' or interpretations of 'history' and 'culture' are indicative of relations of power and their supporting ideologies.

My method employs this attempted synthesis to open up different approaches to examining the discourses of my participants. As identified in the previous chapter, Bruner and Fairclough, along with Potter and Wetherell (1987), all maintain the central importance of language in the making and sharing of meaning and the revelation of aspects of subjectivity and agency. However, it is

important not to fall into a positivist trap of trying to pin down meanings in my chosen texts – even though this is what some of the participants may be trying to do in their textual production for and between themselves. Said advances the ‘dialectic of production’ (1980:40-41) and Fairclough (2001:127-129) introduces the idea of intertextuality where participants weave together narrative from different sources to produce their new text. Both of these ideas include an approach which involves an interplay between texts whether these be the immediately preceding words of a participant in an interview, focus group, or drawing on some other ‘texts’ from memory or direct references to them (as throughout this work). In this respect, Latour’s recommendation to foreground the ‘local’ and allow the participants to choose their resources is useful, as is Latour’s inclusion of the material world in his definition of resources. Because my participants come from different sites it is to be expected that their words will show difference between the sites. Comparing commonality and difference then enables the researcher to draw on the scales used by participants to create a valid and reliable interpretation of the data.

In the last paragraph I have indicated the ideas of variability in texts and the generation of one text from another or others. In the case of the former, Potter and Wetherell (1987:35 and 51) say that variation should be expected in this kind of approach to analysing text and that variation is important in shedding light on difference (1987:64 and 72) to generate and enrich meaningful findings. For my own interpretative purposes in comparing the texts of interviews, focus groups and participants’ writing, describing, interpreting and explaining similarity and difference play a key role in the generation of my own text.

All the texts included in my research (including my own text) have the purpose of constructing a version of the social world to make sense out of the complexity of social life and relationships for the producer of the text and her/his audience. This purpose may find its expression through description, interpretation, inference and reference (to other texts or parts of the same text),

presupposition (of common ground with the audience, for example), interrogation, reflection, categorising, hypothesising, theorising, philosophising, ideologising, politicising, (de-)emotionalising, and so on. Fairclough (2001:118 *et seq.*) includes these ideas in his term 'Members' (i.e. participants' and researchers' as social subjects') Resources (MR) to which concept he also adds the purely linguistic tools of vocabulary, grammar, narrative sequencing and so on. He typifies one aspect of MR as 'prototypes' or 'representations you have stored in your long-term memory' (2001:9) and on which you draw to create and interpret utterances i.e. in an attempt to ensure comprehension. As Fairclough goes on to say (2001:9), '(t)he main point is that comprehension is the outcome of interactions between the utterance being interpreted, and MR'. By extension, therefore, MR are also conditioning of the speaker's utterance. My inclusion of Latour's definition of resources as social and material objects for descriptive purposes as well as Fairclough's idea of members' linguistic, intellectual and cognitive resources for interpretative purposes provides a framework within which to take into account both the external world and the subject's linguistic, intellectual and cognitive engagement with it.

When I come to interpret and explain my findings, Fairclough (2001) is particularly helpful for my own project in enabling an understanding of the place of ideology among MR and in uncovering ideology in the utterances of my participants. Whilst both Fairclough (2001:9) and Potter and Wetherell (1987:108-110) concur with my earlier theorisation of the subject as socially constructed and conditioned and as contributing to production of the social (Latour, 2005), it is Fairclough (2001) who provides the more succinct link to ideology and power through his notion of MR. He argues for the social determination and ideological shaping of MR, further maintaining that language, power and ideology are linked. His link is important because he explains it in terms of the subject's '(r)outine and unselfconscious resort to MR in the ordinary business of discourse . . .' (2001:9), providing a link to Gramsci's (1971) notion of doxa. It is this resort to socially determined and ideologically shaped MR which partly enables the stabilisation of actor-networks

and perpetuates asymmetries of power within the networks (Latour, 2005). Potter and Wetherell (1987:110) support Fairclough's view that an ideological analysis shows how discourse affects important aspects of people's lives such as power relations, quality of lives and the extents to which the subject is 'at ease' with her/his self.

How my chosen methods affect the rest of this work

In the following sections I set the scene for the subsequent chapters of this work. Between them Fairclough (2001) and Potter and Wetherell (1987) offer useful frameworks and insights for the analysis of text and discourse and I draw primarily on these writers in this section. The choice of these writers is an important one in the light of my discussions in the previous chapter about actor-networks as giving insights into understanding the composition of the social and material world (Latour, 2005). Fairclough's (2001) work has a particular focus on 'reading' discourse to lead to an appreciation of wider perspectives of group situation, institution and society with insights into power, common sense and ideology: Latour might therefore accuse Fairclough of making a leap from the local to the global and from the micro to the macro through imposing pre-determined sociological schemata of how society is or should be (Latour, 2005:169-170) when Fairclough uses words such as 'institutions', 'society' and 'structures'. Potter and Wetherell (1987), writing from a social psychology perspective, concentrate on insights into the individual and discourse. However, taken together, the chosen works from the writers serve my purposes of exploring how participants create their understandings of the world and of locating my participants as individuals and members of larger collectivities within that world. I am adopting Fairclough's (2001:91 *et seq.*) broad framework of three stages of analysis – namely description, interpretation, and explanation - for the remainder of this work and I shall attempt to enrich my insights and discussions with reference to related or contrasting ideas and perspectives on analysis from Potter and Wetherell's (1987:160-176) '*Ten stages in the analysis of discourse*' (Annex 5:264).

MR – ‘background knowledge’ and more

As mentioned above MR (Members’ Resources) is a key idea which Fairclough (2001) brings to his approach to analysing language and discourse. He is keen to point out that his notion of MR is more than ‘background knowledge’ (2001:118). I interpret MR as a ‘toolbox’ from which participants bring together their knowledge, experience and language in any combination to carry out the task at hand. Thus Fairclough (2001) maintains that the production of text involves the participant in drawing reflexively and recursively on her/his MR in both the almost simultaneous interpretation and production of texts; that participants draw on different aspects of their MR for different purposes at different times; that MR are also constantly in development and ‘becoming’ (Weedon, 1987) as the subject is equally always in a state of ongoing formation. In a similar vein, Potter and Wetherell (1987:157) discuss ‘interpretative repertoire’ from the perspective of the analyst/researcher as ‘one component in a systematic approach to the study of discourse’. However, I would like to extend this definition of ‘interpretative repertoire’ to include the participants in discourse and text production because the production of language is at one and the same time both an interpretative and productive process. I thus see ‘interpretative repertoire’ as another aspect of MR. Equally, and in consonance with my earlier discussion of ideology as a naturalised aspect of subjectivity through which the individual understands and interprets the world, Fairclough (2001:117) favours the term ‘MR’ as against ‘knowledge’ because MR can include the ideological whereas ‘knowledge’ can be interpreted as being free of ideology.

MR and policy

The idea of MR is particularly apposite in relation to the role that the influence of policy may play in my participants’ contributions and the knowledge generated by my work. It is perhaps true to say that policy as documents can seem to have a somewhat incongruous position in these discussions. I would say this incongruity goes back to the earlier discussion of perceptions of the ‘real’ and an application Latour’s (2005) ideas on the ability of agents to draw appropriate and

relevant resources as they circulate in their networks. Yes, policy documents exist but they are not ever-present as objects when TAs go about their daily work. Nor indeed were policy documents as such present during the interviews and focus group meetings – but policy was present to the extent that we referred directly to matters relating to particular policies or alluded to them during our discussions; we therefore invoked policy and thereby policy formed part of the time and space within which we carried out our discussions. On the other hand, policy has an overt presence in the writings of many of my participants and becomes an important MR for the achievement of the purposes of their writings. On reflection, policy was also present in the sense that my participants' employment in educational settings was a result of policy. I am therefore advancing a view in this work of policy as part of the MR of my participants. In other words, policy forms part of the discursive environment within which my participants operate, within which our discussions and their writings took place and within which this work is written. My present discussion also leads in the direction of the authors of policy. Policy makers have their own MR on which to draw and which are formed from other discourses and practices and these may be quite unrelated to TAs and education. Beyond this, I argued earlier in Chapters 2 and 3 that policy has ideological components: following this line of argument gives a further instance of ideology as a resource circulating in actor-networks with the opportunity for the naturalisation of ideology as 'common sense'. My treatment of policy in subsequent chapters will therefore focus on the discursive 'resources' which policy provides and reflects. Together these aspects of policy as part of MR also illustrate the intertextual nature of discourse and thus of my present work.

Levels of analysis

Through combining Latour's recommendation of keeping the social 'flat' (2005:176) and Potter and Wetherell's (1987:109) focus on the individual, I establish a complementary approach that guards against a conflation of the micro and macro, the local and the global, and maintains a focus on which resources the participants draw on to calibrate and stabilise their understandings

of their world. It is then possible to deploy Fairclough's (2001) recommendation to move to a level of abstraction which explores the data as in an interpretative and explanatory way to examine the participants' use of resources as ideological and revelatory of relations of power. This examination will be quite complex as it requires a close study of individual texts as well as cross-referencing between texts to establish areas of commonality and difference. Potter and Wetherell (1987:168 and 170) stress the importance of identifying both consistency and variability within and between texts as generative of new insights, problems and solutions. A combination of analytical levels and comparisons of commonality and variation will help to produce insights into how TAs construct their worlds and make sense of the 'real', and equally how policy is operated as a MR and attempts to or fails to appeal to the TAs and shape their subjectivity and agency.

Values

In Fairclough's (2001) 'guide' to analysing discourse, identifying the revelation of 'values' in participants' texts features highly at the initial, descriptive stage for facilitating the subsequent stages of interpretation and explanation. Fairclough suggests that four types of value can be revealed through participants' words. Firstly, 'experiential values' are the content of what is said and reveal the knowledge and beliefs of the participant in their presentation of the world. Secondly, 'relational values' reveal how participants understand and express social relationships. Thirdly, 'expressive values' are the ways in which participants examine and (re)present social identities. Finally, 'connective values' reveal not just how participants interrelate and connect sections of texts together but also how participants may relate their text to other texts and objects (including the material – Latour, 2005) outside their own text; there may therefore be elements of intertextuality revealed through connective values. To my mind, Potter and Wetherell (1987:43) add an additional dimension to enable an overview and make comparisons between individuals, groups and texts. This additional dimension comes through their notion of

‘attitude’ as ‘objects of thought located in dimensions of judgement’. In my interpretation, expressing values involves judging and evaluating external reality in order to know how to proceed with the situation in hand or longer term activity.

Values are revealed in both the vocabulary and grammar participants use as well as through interactional aspects of their participation. The revelation of values will vary between types of text because of the different situational contexts within which the texts are produced, the purposes for which they are produced, as well as the type of intended interaction with audience. Just as different values vary in the prevalence in a particular context, prevailing attitudes will also vary. Here, for example, I have in mind the differences between my participants’ written texts in the form of tutor-assessed assignments in contrast with the selected policy texts. Potter and Wetherell do not explicitly discuss ‘values’ in this context. Their approach is concerned with the ‘self-presentation of the subject’ (1987:37) and that the task of the researcher is to analyse how the subject categorises her/his world (1987:37, 109, 116-137). However, their method aligns with Fairclough’s (2001) as revelatory of insights into discourse at the level of the collective.

Description

In applying Fairclough’s (2001) approach to the ‘description’ of language and discourse (Annex 6:265) I identify the values participants reveal through their texts. My examination of vocabulary, grammar, textual form and intertextuality, for example, therefore does not proceed along the lines of a traditional, form-and-function approach of etymology and structural analysis. The approach to the description of the language is rather designed to attempt to reveal how the participants deploy their MR to construct, explain and question their worlds – their subjectivity and agency. As I mentioned earlier, the description and examination of language provide the groundwork for interpretation and explanation, and the exploration of values is a key aspect of this work.

In describing the language it is therefore important that the features for analysis come from the texts themselves and are not generated by me as analyst/researcher (Latour, 2005:56). The categorisation of values and attitudes comes from my reading of the texts, bearing in mind Potter and Wetherell's recommendations to be as inclusive as possible (1987:167) to allow for – indeed to search for – variability as well as consistency in accounts (1987:168). Therefore I do not outline the features of vocabulary and grammar except where applicable to the elucidation of the findings and also in an attempt to give full 'voice' to my participants and their texts. However, at relevant points in the concluding chapters of this work I refer to the writers' ideas, in particular Latour, Fairclough and Potter and Wetherell, where their approach illuminates discussion of the points made.

Interpretation

For this current section I introduce interpretation from two perspectives, both of which rely on the deployment of MR. Both views chime with my understanding of Latour's (2005) ideas about the 'local' site, the standpoints of participant and researcher as they create the networks for their local sites, here through textual production and interpretation, drawing on temporally and spatially distant resources to stabilise and calibrate their resulting views of the world.

The first perspective, then, is my interpretation as researcher/analyst of what my participants say and write. My own interpretation emerges from my identification of categories, values and attitudes through my act of describing discourse. From the other perspective, the texts which my participants produce result from their interpretation of previous texts which may be what has been said immediately before them in an interview, or may be produced in anticipation of what may be said immediately following them. On the other hand they may be interpreting texts at a

greater spatial and temporal distance from the moment when the participants produce their texts – as per my example of the ‘presence’ of policy (see above under ‘MR and Policy’).

Participants’ interpretation is carried out with a view to action seen as the production of further text. From my perspective as analyst the purpose of my interpretation of the texts is to produce this text. From my participants’ perspectives, interpretation was carried out in order to produce a written text as an assignment or ‘action plan’. Or the participants were members of focus groups and interviews where the production of text was perhaps more ‘spontaneous’ and of the moment.

Fairclough (2001:117-118) maintains that both the researcher/analyst and the participants are both interpreters of texts. Whilst the participants interpret text for the immediate purposes of the interview, focus group or task in hand, the researcher/analyst’s task is to look beyond and behind the immediacy of the participant-produced texts to uncover the background and common-sense assumptions and presuppositions (also part of MR) which are included in participants’ texts, or indeed, the assumptions and presuppositions which could have been drawn on but were not favoured by the participant.

Fairclough’s (2001) approach therefore includes the idea of a dialectical interplay between participants in the particular situation where the dialectic involves the choice of some MR as opposed to or at the expense of others. At the stage of interpretation therefore I will be engaged in examining what common ground my participants share. From my list of data sources (see below under ‘About the texts: the sources of my data’) it is evident that the situations which prompt the emergence of discourse have different purposes and are achieved at points where participants bring them together in different sites. Through the very variety of these sources and prompts I demonstrate, for example, the flexible deployment of MR (background assumptions,

presuppositions, time/place, actions, events, common-sense notions and ideology etc.) and the (lack of) conformity to situations which participants demonstrate.

The consequences of the different types of construction of language (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:55) begin to feature in the interpretation of my participants' texts and echo Fairclough's (2001) approach to MR as outlined above. Here I use their ideas on the purposive construction of language as contingent, reserving their approach to widening out my discussion until the stage of explanation.

The stage of interpretation therefore comprises an examination of how the participants use mental representations such as actions, topic and relations (schemata, frames and scripts; Fairclough, 2001:131) to give purpose and meaning to what they say and write. Fairclough (2001:132) stresses the inter-relationships between the three:

Notice . . . that there are interdependencies between the three, in the sense that a particular schema will predict particular topics and subject matters, and particular subject positions and relationships, and therefore particular frames and scripts. Nevertheless, the three do vary independently, and it therefore does make sense to distinguish them in analysis.

Moreover, he (2001:133) suggests that the analysis of actions, topic and relations leads to the uncovering of the 'the ideological imprint of socially dominant power-holders that are likely to be a naturalised resource for all' and thereby opens up the way for the stage of explanation. On the other hand, Fairclough (2001:134) also acknowledges that there may be diversity among and between participants within the same context and across different contexts with different participants. This resonates with Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discussion of the importance of variation.

From my reading of these authors I am advancing a view of my act of interpretation as examining how participants use language to make things happen or to show how things have happened in their texts, through using their MR and looking for commonality and variability between the accounts. In addition to this, and important for the stage of explanation, interpretation enables the researcher/analyst to explore how discourse is dependent of the 'common-sense assumptions of MR' (Fairclough, 2001:135) and whether these assumptions vary between participants and over time.

Explanation

Interpretation therefore links with explanation. Echoing Latour (2005) on the determination of scale being left to the participants, Fairclough (2001) points out that the three stages of CDA cannot be separated as the content of the texts under analysis should be the determinant in the discussion of description, interpretation and explanation with the researcher exercising a flexible analysis following the 'demands' of the text in question. It is at this stage in the process where I shall be exploring how the participants show the stabilisation and calibration of their worlds, indicating relations of power supported by ideology. In the context of explanation I shall explore the individual and group aspects of relations of power and how these may mirror wider network effects and relations.

Interpretations of ideology and power therefore enter into the explanation phase of CDA and I seek to identify ideological aspects of power in terms of 'getting things done' through the participants' indications of 'high', dominant, doxic and dilemmatic ideologies (See also Potter and Wetherell, 1987:137 and 171 on the use of language to legitimise, justify and cause action). Indeed Fairclough (2001:138) promotes the stage of explanation as seeing all MR as ideological:

The stage of explanation involves a specific perspective on MR: they are seen specifically as ideologies. That is, the assumptions about culture, social relationships and social identities which are incorporated in MR, are seen as determined by particular power relations in the society or institution, and in terms of their contribution to struggles to sustain or change these power relations – they are seen ideologically.

(Fairclough, 2001:138)

At the stage of the explanation of discourse, I shall look to apply Fairclough's (2001:117)

'procedure(s) of demystification' through examining three aspects of the texts:

- 1 Social determinants – the power relations operating in different collectivities/networks typified by Fairclough as societal, institutional and situational levels which help to shape the discourse(s);
- 2 Ideologies – the elements of MR which have an ideological or common-sense character ;
- 3 Effects – how the discourse text is positioned in relation to struggles within collectivities typified by Fairclough as group, institutional and societal levels; whether the struggles are overt or covert, normative or creative, contributive to or transformative of existing power relations.

(After Fairclough, 2001:138)

Potter and Wetherell (1987:108-110) reflect and support many of Fairclough's points where the stage of explanation is concerned. Their suggestions enable me to complement my approach towards understanding the collectivities of which the participants are members – i.e. the wider society and institutions - by maintaining a focus on the individual participant as speaker and writer. In line with the notion of the 'becoming' self as always 'under construction' they foreground the idea that subjectivity is produced through discourse as the 'self is subjected to the

discourse' (1987:109). Leading on from this is the promotion of an approach to analyse the ideological aspects of the self (as reflected in the texts produced by the participants) to show that discourse plays a central part in enabling participants to '(re)assemble the social' (Latour, 2005) and to be nodes of connections within actor-networks as they 'hatch' 'the grandiose ingredients of the world' (Latour, 2005:179).

Ethical considerations

How can we be true and respect the inner experiences of people
and at the same time critically assess the cultural discourses that form
the very stuff from which our experiences are made?

(Saukko, 2000)

The practicalities . . .

The British Educational Research Association's (BERA) guidelines for ethical educational research (BERA, 2011) promotes an approach centred on respect for participants and at the same time to enable the researcher's findings to enter the public domain. This respect is based on:

- seeking participants' voluntary informed consent;
- giving participants the right to withdraw from the research at any point;
- taking necessary steps to avoid detriment or harm to participants;
- maintaining participants' rights to privacy and anonymity.

BERA (2011) recommends that these principles are formalised through written agreement. To demonstrate my commitment to these principles I have included the information and proformas for signature given to my participants in Annex 7:267.

The variety of participants' texts necessitated different approaches to gaining their ethical consent. In the case of the interviews and focus groups, for example, I provided my participants with the ethical consent proformas in advance of the meetings once they had agreed in principle to take part. On the other hand, the participants' written texts were produced independent of

this research project and for other purposes. In this case their ethical consent came after a discussion of the purposes of my research and how their work might help to shed light on what it means to be a TA or member of the wider school workforce.

Where interviews and focus groups are concerned, Blaxter *et al.* (1996:149) recommend that participants should have sight of the proposed questions prior to the meetings taking place. I was able to do this in the case of the focus groups but not in the case of the interviews. The reasons for this were practical rather than matters of principle. Interviewing individuals often took place at relatively short notice and it proved impossible to give them prior sight of the questions. Besides this, I knew all the individuals I interviewed because of previous professional relationships with them. However, it was possible to provide the members of the focus groups with the proposed questions in advance of the meetings. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, there were the practicalities of gaining access to institutions of which I was not a member and also of finding times at which all members of a focus group would be available. This meant there was a greater lead-in time before a focus group took place. Secondly, there was the question of building relationships with strangers and of finding people who would be willing to take part.

For the North West High School Focus Group (NWHSG) and the West Midlands Focus Group (WMFG) I was dependent on a colleague in each of the schools to 'open doors' for me to meet their co-workers. In the case of North West Focus Group (NWFG), my position with these TAs had been as their tutor on a Foundation Degree programme. In all three cases I felt that prior sight of the questions would inform and encourage prospective participants. In the case of the first two groups, prior sight of the questions and the ethical consent forms was also intended as a reassurance and transparency of my intentions. In the case of both schools, I was only allowed access because senior managers agreed to it as a result of seeing the questions and ethical consent forms. In the case of the NWFG, which comprised my former students, prior sight of the questions and consent forms was intended as a means of moving the relationship away from

tutor-student and, again, as a reassurance of my intentions. It must be said at this point that one or two members of the third group thought that the focus group was going to probe the knowledge they had gained from the Foundation Degree: sight of the questions dispelled this impression.

Integrity and standpoint apply equally to the analysis of my participants' texts. In the introduction to this thesis I acknowledged my own political standpoint in undertaking this work. The acknowledgement was located in the context of 'critical incidents' which stimulated my thinking about the effects of some current management discourses in schools and some of the wider social effects of national education policy. Part of that acknowledgement of standpoint also included a view that the political nature of this undertaking means that it is impossible to be 'objective', and 'truth' is a relative term. I would like to enhance my support for this view now to include my theoretical and methodological approaches as these are avowedly related to the examination of ideology and relations of power.

Having arrived at this point in the discussion of ethical considerations opens up some much needed space for a discussion of the establishment of an ethical relationship between researcher-as-participant and participants, and researcher-as-analyst and the printed page of the thesis. In other words this goes behind the practicalities of interviewing people, reading their texts, and producing this work. It has to do with the deployment of my own MR.

Behind the practicalities . . .

By inviting a relatively small number of TAs to talk and provide written texts about their work and experiences in a context which is neither overtly prescribed or circumscribed by national and local policy, nor by overt institutional, hierarchical power relations, my intention is to give the opportunity for otherwise 'silenced' or 'censored' individuals to be heard; to provide spaces in which they can describe and discuss their subjective experiences. However, having said that, a consideration of and reflection on my presence within the various groups is necessary.

Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (in Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:396) contrast the differences in situations created by the presence of the researcher in focus groups and one-to-one interviews. They promote the view of focus groups as generative of 'synergy among participants' (including the researcher) and inhibitive of 'the authority of the researcher' where 'collective memory and shared knowledge' can be explored through listening to others making sense of their lives. In contrast they maintain that '(i)ndividual interviews strip away the critical interactional dynamics that constitute much of social practice and collective meaning making'. On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that a focus group can be subject to inhibitions of its own because of the power relations and hierarchical status of some participants compared to others.

Equally, the researcher-as-participant is subject to those same power relations prevalent in the group. My own resolution to the dilemmas and tensions created by this eventuality will be not to intervene to give others a chance to speak since I would then be altering the dynamics within a group of people constituted before my inclusion within the group. I felt this would also be justified through the intention expressed in this chapter and Chapter 3 to examine the discourse at the level of the individual and the group as well as institutionally and societally. What therefore matters here is my ethical treatment of the resulting transcribed text of the group as a resource for analytical and intertextual work. Although I must say that a sense of ethical 'unease' would remain as a result of this kind of situation because individuals may be behaving ideologically without being aware of it, or, indeed, may be playing a role fully conscious of their exercise of power. Thus whilst my fieldwork in the form of focus groups will be undertaken overtly with *bona fide* attempts to give reassurance and transparency of intention, it could be argued that there may be an element of 'covert fieldwork' (Fontana and Frey in Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:142) to the extent that I would allow power relations between participants to play themselves out in order to be able to examine the local level of interaction. My role would then switch from participant to observer.

Concerning ethical aspects of the one-to-one interviews, Chase (Chapter 2 in Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:57-94), writing from a narrative enquiry perspective, examines the ways in which researchers enable their participants' and their own voices to feature in writing about their research where some researchers put the narrator's (participant's) voice in the 'limelight' through the use of a 'supportive voice' (Chase in Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:75)– a principle which is applicable to focus groups and indeed might appear to feature exclusively in the production and examination of my participants' written texts. On this matter, however, Fairclough (2001) and Potter and Wetherell (1987) point out that discourse and text are always produced in response to a stimulus or in anticipation of the production of future discourse and text. The kinds of questions, interjections, turn-taking and sequencing of encounters between researcher and participant(s) may prove to be full of assumptions and presuppositions, and indeed loaded with their own ideological assumptions – all of which may have ethical implications for my reading of the texts in terms of their description, interpretation and explanation. If ethical dilemmas and tensions arise in this context, I will explore them and explain my conclusions and interpretations of the findings.

Once the transcription of interviews and focus groups has taken place and the texts have been provided, I face subsequent dilemmas and choices in the process of description, interpretation and explanation (Fairclough, 2001) where the 'cultivation of productive relations' (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis in Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:396) between my text and those of my participants is concerned. Reading across multiple participant-produced texts and drawing on other texts to engage in reflection, analysis and critique is in itself an ethical process, requiring an attention to the detail, original context and justification of intertextual links and relationships. To be borne in mind here are temptations to make too great a claim for my findings, or to impose false categories and values on what my participants tell me.

The identification and 'isolation' of selected national policy documents as a significant source of influence on the formation of the participants' subjectivity and agency was arguably a presupposition without prior-proven foundation in the reality of the participants. However, I justify this inclusion through the reliance and importance that society attaches to policy as a mechanism for getting things done. Policy was also a major concern of the critiques from the writers in my literature review. The ethical implication for my relationship with my participants and analysis of the findings is to seek links to national policy in what they say and not to impose 'policy' on their words. Tellingly, Fairclough (2001) says that 'the relationship between policy and action is a mediated one'. In its turn this may raise ethical questions about policy and the actions of agents who bring policy into the networks of their institutions. I may therefore uncover wider questions about the ethics of the naturalisation of discourse and practice within social settings such as schools.

The last point about the wider social world within which my research sits leads naturally to other themes often included under the broad topic of ethics, namely whether the research is valid, reliable and generalisable. In this context I will take steps to ensure that the validity and reliability of the research findings are aspects of my academic and professional ethics in relation to the treatment of data and theory. Drawing on ideas from Silverman (2000: Chapter 13) I claim validity and reliability for my account as a *bona fide* attempt to represent accurately the social phenomena to which it refers. I attempt to ensure this through seeking comparisons and contrasts between internal factors within the texts and between them and in their relationship to the theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter 3. For a qualitative approach to data analysis the implication in the achievement of validity is that all cases in the data should be included in that analysis to avoid any criticism of anecdotalism or of making spurious claims for the findings. This has the added implication that cases which deviate need to be analysed equally rigorously and

then a relationship sought to the findings of others. Indeed, as I discussed above, deviation and variation are important in illuminating new perspectives and problems

To support the validity and reliability of my research, I aimed for a consistent categorisation which stemmed, in the first place, from the words of my participants themselves. In my discussions in Chapters 5 – 7, I also relate these to the theoretical perspectives outlined in the preceding chapter and, where appropriate, to the findings of the researchers included in my review of policy and literature. Validity and reliability were supported through the full transcription of interviews and focus groups (Silverman, 2000), but excluded from this work for ethical reasons of anonymity and confidentiality. Silverman (2000) illustrates and amplifies the point of transcription through the example of tabulation by reference to the terms employed by the speakers: this maintains the analyst's access for reflection and comparison across transcripts whilst at the same time providing a framework of reliable cross-references. In the case of my research I have either quoted directly from the words of the participants in Chapters 5 - 7.

'Generalisability' is often an outcome required of research. Most often the word is associated with the more quantitative, 'scientific', rationalistic approaches to research where the purpose is to identify general trends for large populations. In this project I am expressly exploring the experiences of a very small number of people at particular moments in time; government-sponsored research projects have already explored large populations of TAs, some of them over an extended period of time (e.g. Blatchford *et al.*, 2009b), and individuals are rendered mute in large-scale projects. My sample of participants is geographically diverse, sector-diverse and gender-diverse – females predominate, reflecting to some extent the composition of the wider school workforce. In terms of precedents for my approach, small populations, or even an individual, feature widely in this type of qualitative research (Erben, 1998). Engaging with a small number of participants enables the researcher to attempt to lay bare the effect of commonly shared assumptions and presuppositions that support taken-for-granted relations and practices.

This is in itself an ethical endeavour. The findings from the data generated by this project are not generalisable to whole populations of members of the wider school workforce. However, they are indicative of the kinds of experiences these individuals have had. On the other hand I hope that the theoretical underpinning of my methods together with the application of my methods will be replicable and therefore might be generalisable to other projects of this type and scale.

Ethical considerations therefore apply to various contexts of this work and reflect the earlier theorisation of individuals as agents in networks and the contingent mobilisation of human and material resources to meet diverse purposes (Latour, 2005). In effect a consideration and application of ethical research procedures and processes is an attempt to ensure that immutable and combinable mobiles are drawn upon and created in valid, reliable and transparent ways that do not harm the participants or distort their words. The ethical treatment of the participants is a central concern that is important both for the interview and focus group settings, for the subsequent analysis of their texts, as well as for the wider dissemination of the findings from this research.

About the participants and the texts: the sources of my data

On a more descriptive level than the preceding discussions, below I give some biographical information about the participants in the research and go on to list the sources and types of data I use for the stages of description, interpretation and explanation (Fairclough, 2001) in the subsequent chapters of this project. The list of sources also indicates my professional relationship with the participants where one existed, or how an initial introduction to individuals and groups came about where there was no prior existing relationship.

This table presents the participants in my research: they have all been given pseudonyms. All the participants were employed full-time by their schools. The table gives information on the highest

qualification gained by each participant, reports the role-title given by the participant and indicates whether each primarily supports the pupil, the teacher or has a management role.

Figure 2

The participants in the research

Alias	Length of experience	Highest Qualification	Job title	Teacher or pupil support	Management responsibility
Alice	5+ years	Level 5 / Foundation Degree	TA	Pupil	No
Amy	1 year	Level 3 / A level	TA	Pupil	No
Anna	25 years	Level 3 / A level	TA	Pupil	No
Ben	2 weeks	Level 6 / BSc (Hons)	TA	Pupil	No
Claire	5 years	Level 5 / Foundation Degree	Level 4 Deaf-blind intervener	Pupil	No
Danni	7 years	Level 4 / NVQ	TA	Pupil	No
Debbie	7 years	Level 5 / Foundation Degree	TA/HLTA	Pupil	No
Eileen	4 years	Level 5 / Foundation Degree	Pastoral manager	Pupil	Yes – oversees the work of other TAs and Learning Mentors
Helen	6 years	Level 5 / Foundation Degree	TA	Pupil	No

Jeremy	10+ years	Level 6 /BA (Hons)	HLTA with responsibility for 1-2-1 support and specialist provision	Pupil	Yes – manages 'Nurture Department'.
Joan	8 years	Level 5 / Foundation Degree	Vocational and work-related leader	Teacher and other TAs and Learning Support staff	Yes – manages department including some colleagues with QTS
Joanne	5 years	Level 5 / Foundation Degree	TA	Pupil	No
Laura	1 year and 3 months	Level 5 / Foundation Degree	TA	Pupil	No
Maria	11 years	Level 5 / Foundation Degree	TA	Pupil	No
Marj	5 years	Level 5 / Foundation Degree	TA	Pupil	No
Martin	6 years	Level 5 / Foundation Degree	Senior ICT Technician	Teacher	No
Mary	35 years	Level 4 / NVQ:	TA	Pupil	No
Pete	6 years	Level 3 / A level	TA	Pupil	No
Phil	6+ years and currently 1 term working in LA	Level 5 / Foundation Degree	Formerly Learning Support Unit (LSU) Manager: currently CAF	Teacher	Yes – formerly departmental manager and

			Coordinator for a local authority		currently LA CAF ¹² Coordinator
Sara	15 years	Level 4 / NVQ	TA	Pupil	No
Sarah	6+ years	Level 5 / Foundation Degree	TA	Pupil	No
Sharon	7 years	Level 3 / A level	TA	Pupil	No
Tom	1 year	Level 7 / MSc	TA	Pupil	No

Oral data was gathered through focus groups and interviews as follows:

- One meeting with North West Focus Group (NWFG): an all-female group of 7 TAs from a mixture of primary, comprehensive and selective secondary sector schools in the North West of England. I was tutor for two modules to these TAs during their two years on a Foundation Degree¹³ for TAs.
- Two meetings with West Midlands Focus Group (WMFG): a group of 1 male and 3 female TAs from a secondary sector comprehensive school in the West Midlands of England. I was visiting tutor to one of the members of this group during her first year on a Foundation Degree for TAs. She introduced me to the group.
- One meeting with North West High School Focus Group (NWHSG): a group of 2 male and 5 female TAs from a secondary sector comprehensive school in the North West of England. I was introduced to this group by a colleague who was a teacher at the school.

¹² LA CAF Coordinator = Local Authority Common Assessment Framework Coordinator. Common Assessment Framework – used for assessing the needs of children for multi-agency support.

¹³ Foundation Degree = a two-year programme in English Higher Education leading to an exit award at Level 5. These degrees often have a highly vocational emphasis.

- Two interviews with Jeremy: a male TA in a secondary sector Special School in the North West of England. I became acquainted with this participant through my work as tutor for professional development modules for the wider school workforce when I visited his school.
- One interview with Phil: a male TA in a secondary sector comprehensive (high) school in the North West of England. I was tutor to this participant for two modules during his two years on a Foundation Degree for the wider school workforce.
- One interview with Martin: a male IT technician (as a member of the wider school workforce) from a secondary sector comprehensive (high) school in the North West of England. I was tutor to this participant for one module during his first year on a Foundation Degree for the wider school workforce.

Written data was gathered through participant-generated written texts as follows:

- Phil's 'Reflection on 'Work-based Learning': this was an assignment completed at the end of the first of two years of a Foundation Degree for members of the wider school workforce.
- Sarah's (a member of NWFG) reflections on 'Planning, Assessment and Evaluation of Learning': this was an assignment completed in part-fulfilment of a Foundation Degree for TAs.
- Joan's 'Personal Development Action Plan (PDAP) 1', 'PDAP 2' and her 'Reflection on Work-based Learning' completed as part of two modules on work-based learning in years 1 and 2 of a Foundation Degree for members of the wider school workforce. Joan was at the time a 'Vocational and Work-related Leader' in a Technology College in the South East

of England. I was tutor to this participant during her time on the Foundation Degree for the wider school workforce.

- Claire's 'PDAP 1' completed as part of a module on work-based learning in year 1 of a Foundation Degree for members of the wider school workforce. Claire was at the time providing interventions for the deaf and/or blind in a secondary high school in Yorkshire. I was tutor to this participant during her time on the Foundation Degree for the wider school workforce.
- Eileen's 'PDAP 1' and 'PDAP 2' completed as part of two modules on work-based learning in years 1 and 2 of a Foundation Degree for members of the wider school workforce. Eileen was at the time a 'Pastoral Manager' in a secondary sector comprehensive high school in the North West of England. I was tutor to this participant during her time on the Foundation Degree for the wider school workforce.

Chapter 5: The findings of the research - how the TAs locate themselves

Introduction

In this chapter I begin to apply the theoretical and methodological frameworks and tools established in Chapters 3 and 4. In particular, this chapter makes use of Fairclough's (2001) approach to the 'description' of discourse and addresses the following purposes of the research:

- to give 'voice' to a number of TAs across a small range of educational settings;
- to examine the discourses of my participants for indications of the effect of policy on the shaping of their professional identity, subjectivity and agency;
- to gain insights into where my participants locate themselves in relation to each other and other networks in education;
- to gain insights into how my participants define their roles and how they describe the work they do;
- to identify similarity and variation in the participants' discourse(s) across a small range of educational settings.

In order to address the above purposes, this chapter engages with the following research questions:

How is 'policy' evident in the discourses, descriptions and discussions of my participants? How does 'policy' shape the subjectivity and agency of my participants? Do other factors than policy shape the subjectivity and agency of my participants?

Do the participants' discourses, descriptions and discussions vary between and within sites?

What do the words of the participants reveal about them as knowledgeable subjects and agents,

and about the 'educational environments' within which they work? What are the implications of this?

Is there evidence of the operation of relations of power? What are the implications of these relations?

In my introductory comments below I recapitulate some of the main findings from the literature and policy to give a context for an exploration of the participants' words.

My research took place against a New Labour policy backdrop of education remodelling and workforce reform which, from the outset, envisaged wider roles, career progression and access to training for members of the wider school workforce within a framework of centrally determined standards:

. . . our support staff are recognised for their contribution to raising standards and have more opportunities to take on extended roles in support of teaching and learning, supported by the right training, standards frameworks and new career paths, with remuneration that reflects their level of training, skills and responsibilities and with overall numbers growing as far as necessary to deliver reform.

(‘National Agreement’, ATL et al., 2003:4)

The ambiguous role of teachers in their relationship with TAs was described as follows:

Qualified teachers make the leading contribution to teaching and learning, reflecting their training and expertise . . . Accountability for the overall learning outcomes of a particular pupil must rest with that pupil's qualified classroom/subject teacher . . . Teaching assistants who interact with pupils in

relation to teaching and learning, must do so within a regulated system of supervision and leadership operated by the pupils' classroom/subject teacher . . . Teachers will not usually be required to undertake formal aspects of the line management of support staff . . .

(‘National Agreement’, ATL et al., 2003:12)

Managers were to be committed to enabling flexibility and the removal of demarcations:

. . . our headteachers and leadership teams are committed to innovation, leading the change to new, more flexible, ways of working

(‘National Agreement’, ATL et al., 2003:4)

Reform was deemed necessary because of a need to ‘turn the tide on teacher workload’ (ATL et al., 2003:1)

The NA attempted to set the direction for subsequent reform and remodelling. Part of the purpose of this chapter is to engage with an evaluation of these overarching statements of remodelling from the perspective of the participants in my research.

Prior to the change of national government in May 2010, the remodelling agenda had developed to include intentions to promote ‘multi-agency’ working across children’s and young people’s public services including education through, for example, ECM (DfES, 2004a) and the allied CAF (CWDC, 2007).

My discussion of these policy initiatives has shown how they have attempted to determine that TAs should function as ‘junior partners’ in relation to qualified teachers through the ‘remodelling’ agenda of the NA (ATL et al., 2003), as well as through the consequent establishment of the vocational standards for TAs and HLTAs (latterly, TDA, 2007a and b respectively), together with

the further enshrinement of the principles in the professional standards for teachers (latterly, TDA, 2007c). These policy initiatives have been interpreted as attempts to professionalise the role of the TA (e.g. Bach et al., 2006), or to normativise the agency of TAs within schools. Based on a rationalised, hierarchical view of the division of labour, policy envisaged interlocking networks between teachers and TAs. This policy view did not necessarily include a direct 'line-management' relationship between teachers and TAs. It could be argued that such a relationship would have built on and extended the existing hierarchical, 'rationalist' structures of schools, as they had gradually developed and naturalised over the preceding decade or so (Hutchings, 2010:112). To paraphrase Smyth and Gunter (in Chapman and Gunter, 2009:193), the policy attempts to position TAs as 'junior partners' to teachers could also be seen as enabling the TAs to support 'elite adults' (i.e. teachers and school managers) in meeting targets.

In Chapter 2 I presented aspects of policy and literature *in tandem*, pointing out that, for example, Blatchford et al. (2009) sought to promote the continuing primacy of the teacher in the relationship on the grounds of qualification and expertise. To counter this view Petrie (2005) argued for a re-examination of 'pedagogy' and against the limiting of its definition as an attribute, property or quality particular to qualified teachers (McGregor, 2004b). Taking a wider view of developments in state involvement in reform within and beyond education, other writers have placed the policy initiatives in wider socio-political contexts such as a 'reworking of the division of labour' (Rayner and Gunter, 2005), or 'flexibilisation' of the workforce (Ball, 2009). Or they have seen the policy initiatives as aspects of wider public sector reform (Ball, 2008), resulting from a statist, interventionist approach (Barber, 1996).

In Chapter 2 I also established common themes which problematised TAs' purpose and deployment. Now is an opportune moment to enumerate some of the principal areas which

emerged from that consideration of policy and literature. Significant among the themes in the identification of the problematic areas were:

- Difficulties throughout the period (2003 – 2010) in establishing a definition of the role as, for example, recently exemplified in Blatchford et al.'s research (2009);
- The policy-promoted view of the teacher as the 'lead professional' in the relationship and resulting tensions in terms of remit, pay and status for TAs and their encroachment on the traditional 'territory' of teachers (Quicke, 2003; Howes, 2003; Woolfson and Truswell, 2005; Kerry, 2005; Rayner and Gunter 2005; Butt and Gunter, 2005; Bach *et al.*, 2006; Collins and Simco, 2006; Thompson, 2006; Hutchings *et al.*, 2009a and b);
- Policy definitions of TA role within wider school workforce nomenclature and remit, none of which were matched by the reality in schools (Hutchings *et al.*, 2009a and b)
- A need to develop closer collaboration between TAs and teachers where planning, teaching and review/evaluation were concerned (Quicke, 2003; Woolfson and Truswell, 2005);
- The TAs' pedagogic work with pupils;
- The current, dominant approaches to education management, which fluctuate between what are commonly referred to as command management (Thomas, 2005) and distributed leadership (Gunter, 2005) but are both concerned with a delivery model of education (Thomas, 2005) in a culture of compliance and monitoring (Petrie, 2005) with top-down policy-determined reform (Gunter, 2008; Ball, 2008 *inter alia*)
- The current, dominant approaches to policy-prescribed curriculum knowledge, (Rayner and Gunter, 2005) underpinned by a 'drive' to raise standards and increase accountability (Butt and Gunter, 2005).

Allied to this lack of clarity in role definition, I noted how writers expressed notions such as 'ambiguity' (Hutchings et al., 2009a and b), 'peripherality' (Edmond, 2003), 'being in between' (Howes, 2003), and 'blurring' (Collins and Simco, 2006) in relation to the role of TAs. The

identification of areas of the role lacking clarity was made not just in the context TA-teacher relations and practices but also in the areas of pupil-school and parent-school relations and practices where TAs were found to provide a key link (notably Howes, 2003; Woolfson and Truswell, 2005; Collins and Simco, 2006).

Having briefly reiterated some of the themes of Chapter 2, I note at this point that the literature attests two trends. On the one hand, one body of the literature either sought to move the TAs in the direction of normativisation within the structures of schools or, equally, to question why this normativisation had not occurred. In other words, there were attempts to essentialise the category 'TA' and to rationalise the category within ideologised hierarchical structures and relations. On the other hand, another corpus of literature questioned the current ideologised structures and connected power relationships and social practices in education in general and in schools in particular. In my Introduction and Methods Chapter I identified that the 'voices' of TAs were generally lacking in the literature, and this often left an impression of something being done to TAs rather than in collaboration and consultation with them. The earlier research and literature also tended to concentrate on TAs in primary schools as there were historically larger numbers of TAs working in those settings.

Turning now to the findings of my research, I proceed by applying the theoretical and methodological frameworks established in Chapters 3 and 4. This will follow an examination of the discourses of my participants broadly in line with Fairclough's (2001) suggested approach of description, interpretation and explanation. My discussion in this chapter and the next therefore proceeds as follows:

- Description: an examination of the social situations, and social and material networks identified through the participants' contributions
- Interpretation and explanation:

Ideas from Latour (2005 *inter alia*), as discussed above in Chapter 4, proved useful in arriving at a description of the discourses (Fairclough, 2001) of the participants. Latour's (2005) work provided an approach which enabled me to establish what I have termed 'descriptive categories' which arose from the social situations, and social and material networks through time and space as described and discussed by the participants. His work was therefore useful in enabling a linkage with Fairclough's notion of MR to include people, material objects and space and place. The 'descriptive categories' in their turn provided the themes for the 'analytical categories' I used in the interpretation and explanation (Fairclough, 2001) of the discourses.

The TAs locate themselves: descriptive themes from their discourses

The TAs in this research all work within schools as institutions. Describing schools as institutions conjures up an idea of their operating as timeless, uniform, undifferentiated and monolithic organisations within the wider, timeless and equally monolithic national institution of 'education'. Likewise the representation of my research participants as TAs conjures up similar ideas of a group of people with a distinct and common identity within schools as institutions. This kind of representation is useful for the rhetorical and ideological purposes of policy makers and school managers, and I have presented instances of this kind of representation operating with regard to the NA, the vocational standards for TAs and HLTAs (TDA, 2007a and b); the National Curriculum and its allied evaluative and monitoring mechanisms have provided further examples. The findings of my research indicated, however, that this view does not reflect the relations and practices in schools and, hence, schools are far from uniform and monolithic organisations. The usefulness of this approach was in enabling me to establish descriptive categories for their discourses in line with the ideas of space and place, and the material. Whilst these categories overlap in the words of my participants, the division proved useful in supporting a discussion of the 'location' of the TAs within their institutions and in relation to wider networks. This chapter therefore provides a description of their discourses around the themes of:

- space and place;
- the textual as a material aspect of their world;
- other actors and actor-networks.

This in turn enabled the establishment of interpretative and explanatory categories for the next chapter around:

- the social practices and relations within and between networks.

Indeed this approach also resonated with the testimonies of my participants as they made and shared meanings (Bruner, 1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995) about their working lives and drew on their MR (Fairclough, 2001). The key categories which emerged from an examination of their words included references to:

- their physical locations (classrooms and other places/spaces)
- their mobilisation of textual and other materials (Latour, 2005) to understand, support and undertake their work;
- the work they undertook with children, teachers and others.

Their words resonated with aspects of both policy and literature in many respects. The foregrounding of the discourses of TAs in my current work, however, adds new dimensions to some of the themes developed in previous literature such as the division of labour, relations of power, the use of space.

Broadly speaking, therefore, this chapter is an attempt to indicate how the knowledgeable subject as agent finds her/his way through an environment of (non-)interlocking material and social networks of practices and relations.

Space and place

The initial, general examination of the accounts of the participants revealed some immediate differences between the locations of the TAs in primary schools and those in the secondary

sector. All the TAs regardless of school sector tended to be attached to particular individual pupils or groups of pupils, with the location of those pupils determining the location of the TA. Moving out from this, however, the location of the pupils themselves was determined by the axial location of teachers in classrooms, and this was where the differences between the school sectors became evident. Pupils in primary schools tended to be allocated to a generalist class teacher in a particular classroom according to the pupils' age and throughout most of the day. In the secondary sector, on the other hand, pupils tended to be much more mobile and moved regularly throughout the day from teacher to teacher in different classrooms according to subject or curriculum area. Thus I found that the primary TAs tended to work predominantly with class teachers (for example, Maria and Joanne) whereas their secondary colleagues tended to move with their pupils from teacher to teacher (for example, Danni).

The primacy of the classroom supported the primacy of the teacher within that location. This primacy was reflected in the way the TAs in both sectors described their own location both within and outside classrooms in relation to the teachers and the pupils. When they discussed their work in classrooms the TAs talked in terms of being located with their pupil or with groups of pupils at pupils' tables and in pupils' work areas within classrooms:

So you are having to sit with children and teach them about what the work actually is, what the outcomes from that learning or lesson is, as a fall-back really on what that lesson actually is and it might not be about what the teacher has been teaching.

(Maria)

Their discussions of their actions within that location were contrasted in their discussions of the work the teacher does within that same location:

The teacher is fulfilling the learning goals for those children constantly. TA support is there really just to support the teacher in assuring that the learning of the children is consistent.

(Helen)

. . . the teacher relays the lesson to the class and most of our pupils . . . haven't quite understood, so you are actually . . . differentiating . . . they might get it or they might not, so then you have got to think of another way of doing it.

(Anna)

When the TAs discussed their actions with teachers in classrooms, the idea of moving towards or away from the teacher's, both figuratively and literally, space often featured:

They (the teachers) have given me work to take out . . .

(Maria)

. . . a TA can take a group from that class and be placed in other places or go out of the class . . .

(Sarah)

I would be there on my own and say, 'Do you want me to come in?', because it would be a Key Stage 2 meeting, and they would say, 'You are not needed. Do you want to go and tidy the stage . . . ?'

(Helen)

. . . we are literally running with the kids from one lesson to the next . . .

(Danni)

. . . the kids . . . see you as an equal standing as far as the discipline and the status is concerned and therefore you get, you can get a lot more out of the children . . .

(Marj)

It's (The job is) things like quiet words in people's ears, in teachers' ears . . .

(Anna)

Through spending time in lessons with experienced teachers, I hope observe how they use differentiation to support and stretch each student in their class . . . I am also going to work shadow one of the experienced department leaders and look at how her knowledge helps to support and develop her team (of teachers).

(Joan)

The 'classroom' or teachers' space emerged from the TAs' words as a demarcated site within the wider institution, containing subdivisions within it demarcated according to role. The TAs went on to demonstrate that the subdivisions also played a part in the relationships and practices in the classroom:

You have to make them understand what they are learning.

(Mary)

I had to alter the teaching input

(Laura)

They (Teachers) have this great thing about progression don't they, but these children don't get the basics and the foundations then they are not going to progress to anything . . . That's where I think we as TAs come in.

(Joanne)

. . . the teachers might have these children for the first time, whereas they know we've been working with these kids for the last three years . . .

(Marj)

. . . sometimes just taking the time to say to the teacher 'Look, I know that so and so is a little bugger . . . if you want me to take over for you' or . . . saying WHERE . .

. you can help . . . Or . . . 'Look, I'm rubbish at maths, but I can do this for you'.

(Marj)

. . . they (the children) may come in with some baggage from home for instance . .

. further on down the line . . . the teacher may not be aware . . . they've (the children) got a lot on their plate so this is where we can keep them informed and .

. . be the go-between . . . so that . . . makes it easier for the teacher and for the child if you're . . . keeping everyone in the loop.

(Sharon)

The centrality of the teacher in the classroom was further reinforced when the TAs discussed their work with individual pupils (often also called '1-2-1') or 'extract groups'. Here the idea of moving with pupils into other places outside the classroom played a large part in their descriptions and discussions. Often, and particularly in the case of the primary TAs, the 'other places' were not specified as classrooms:

. . . you take them out and support them one to one . . .

(Joanne)

. . . I had to take him out almost for every lesson . . .

(Laura)

The primary school TAs also gave evidence of movement from teacher to teacher, for example:

. . . a TA can go from being with year 1, year 2, year 3 within a couple of weeks . . .

(Sara)

Jeremy, in the secondary Special School, talked about the pupils going to and from the 'department' and of him 'going down into school', again separating spaces within the wider institution.

The TAs in the West Midlands High School focus group, and Jeremy (HLTA in a secondary Special School) were members of SEN and Nurture Departments. This additional dimension of networking of the TAs within the institutional spaces of the secondary school created a place which mirrored the organisation of the secondary school along departmental lines and which featured in their discussions (for example, Danni and Jeremy). In the case of the West Midlands High School, the word 'unit' was used by Jo to emphasise the contrast between teacher space and role and TA space and role:

. . . I never want to stand in front of a class and teach them. I love working one-to-one in the unit . . .

(Jo)

The TAs in the North West High School Focus Group did not appear to 'belong' to a Special Needs Department and a sense of temporal and spatial dislocation together with agentic insecurity was therefore evidenced:

At the moment we are this group, working with this teacher, we are in this situation, it's this room, etc. And I am supposed to be doing that. And it . . . it's instant . . .

(Sharon)

The tenor of the TAs' discussions tended almost to a view that a classroom is not a classroom unless or until a qualified teacher is present within the space, the space then becoming a particular kind of place because of the agents who occupy it. That is to say, the TAs could be seen to be partly defining themselves through their own position and location relative to teachers within institutional space. This involved them in drawing comparative and contrastive differences between the naming and use of space and place within their institutions which resulted from the ascriptions of particular kinds of agency (teaching and other than teaching) to teachers and to themselves. Comparative and contrastive physical location and agency were therefore employed

as MR which, in their turn, had developed from recursive encounters and participations within those institutional locations over time.

Interruptions to recursive location also proved significant in locational and working relationships between TAs to teachers. This was particularly pronounced in the case of some of the primary TAs in the North West Focus Group and led to feelings of dislocation and disorientation which were expressed through allusions to sudden and unpredictable interruptions to location. These interruptions to location often occurred as a result of direction from the management of the school – i.e. from a network outside the immediate and recursive network of the TA and teacher:

. . . we (the teacher and TA) don't know from one week to the next if I will come in and be in year 6 or if I will be in Reception . . .

(Debbie)

In contrast the recursive location of the secondary TAs can be seen as one of ongoing movement because of their regular transits from teacher to teacher during each day:

. . . it's the time factor thing as well because we all move – as you're trying to have a word with the teacher at the end of the lesson you've got the next lot of children that are coming in . . .

(Danni)

Whereas in a school like this where there is like eighteen hundred kids and umpteen teachers, you can see like 5 different teachers in one day.

(Ben)

Nevertheless, similar feelings of dislocation and disorientation presented across both sectors when recursive actions and relations might be interrupted by management directions to TAs to change their habituated locations:

. . . we are kind of stretched and pulled in all different areas . . . just to fill in the voids within the school really.

(Laura)

There's not quite enough of us to go round. And it's the children (with) . . . 25-hours statements that have to have priority . . . And the ones with less hours, they do suffer. And it's not right. It's not right.

(Jo)

. . . my concerns are that we are going to . . . get reduced in number whereas . . . the demand for what we do is not going to diminish, it's just going to carry on if not increase. So, the numbers will not quite add up . . . some children are going to be unfortunate victims . . .

(Sara)

Immutable and combinable mobiles: the TAs' mobilisation of texts

The spatial was not the only aspect of their words that helped the TAs to 'locate' and 'define' themselves socially. Their discourses also involved references to material objects, most often in the form of texts, as they described and discussed their work. There were two aspects to their references to the material. On some occasions participants would describe and discuss their use of physical objects such as specialist teaching equipment or textual materials in the form of worksheets or schemes of work to support their learners. Thus could be heard, for example:

Pete: But you know . . . we'll not be allowed to get access to those . . . software.

Marj: I don't know

Pete: We can't, we can't get access to that.

Marj: I think there's something printed out for us by someone.

. . . create a cookery life skills pack for young persons that are visually and multi-sensory impaired . . .

(Claire)

. . . follow our assessment Criteria (sic) and work with several departments on ensuring all needs of the students are being met . . .

(Eileen)

On other occasions they would refer to material and/or textual objects which were outside their immediate social networks as TAs or of the school and were thus importations both into the school setting and into the discourses of the participants. As examples of this I tender the following:

. . . they are not going to get anywhere with the SATs . . . they have interventions to do and that is going to help with the SATS results.

(Debbie)

. . . there may not be the prescribed 5 GCSEs grades A to C but in actual fact they've achieved . . .

(Danni)

. . . we're taking kids who can't even spell their name the right way round and we're being able to bring them up to level where they could get a 'D' at GCSE . . .

(Marj)

. . . you wouldn't necessarily want to talk to him about National Curriculum levels because he wouldn't (understand) . . .

(Tom)

. . . Dance sessions for our disadvantaged students and then successfully rolling it out to other students within KS3/KS4 that may be interested.

(Eileen)

In the sections of this chapter I have called these references to other texts 'discursive mobilisations' because the participants only rarely made direct citations of document titles or quoted verbatim from other texts; rather they tended to make allusions to other texts. I have concentrated on the participants' mobilisations of texts (as opposed to material objects such as specialist equipment) to support my description of their discourses because texts were pivotal in their networking with each other and others. On some, fairly rare, occasions participants made discreet reference to national policy documents and developments directly attributable to the policies: these policy documents and developments included 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) (DfES, 2004a), or the NA (ATL et al., 2003). However, I have also included here in my definition of text references to non-specific text such as 'attainment data', 'tests', 'lesson plans', 'attainment targets', 'log books' etc. where the ideas expressed a textual 'origin'. Following Fairclough's (2001:127-129) ideas on intertextuality in the construction of discourse, I interpreted participants' mobilisations of 'text' to include all references to textualised material used as MR to support their discussions.

The purposes of their mobilisations of texts were various but shared a common, underlying theme, namely to support the stabilisation and ordering of social and material effects in one or more location and, indeed, across locations within their institutional spaces. The texts could therefore be seen as 'immutable mobiles' (Latour, 1987, 2005) used to configure 'space-times away from (their) origins' and to hold 'in place a stable set of links with other entities' (McGregor, 2004b:365). On examination, the use of texts gave an indication of at least five social and material effects, with the texts often supporting more than one of these effects:

- 1 As frameworks of measurement/indicators of progress/success;
- 2 As frameworks for action;
- 3 As a cause of change in routine;
- 4 As normativising within and across sites, and allied to this point;

5 As indicators of boundaries and demarcations.

Through their discursive mobilisations of texts the participants were thus establishing connections and relationships between their social practices and relations with those of others. The texts were drawn into their discussions as intrinsic parts of their networks, contributing to a configuration of people and things which enabled the participants to 'anchor' themselves and others within wider institutional networks and networks external to the school.

To illustrate my discussions of the centrality of text to the social situations of the TAs I proceed with this section of the chapter as follows:

- Illustrations of the importance of the presence, absence and withdrawal of text to the participants' social situations;
- Illustrations of the effects of 'named' policy texts on the participants' social situations;
- Illustrations of the use of 'unnamed' policy texts on the participants' social situations.

The importance of texts in supporting or undermining actor-networks in institutions or between groups and individuals within institutions became very apparent on four occasions in three different focus groups when participants discussed the presence, absence or removal of texts. In the first instance, Alice from the North West Focus Group told how TAs in her school communicate with teachers via the creation of text about pupils' learning in the pupils' exercise books. Here the creation of text was intended to overcome difficulties in communicating directly with the teacher caused by the busy school environment, i.e. text as used to stabilise links between entities and across time and space:

I think in a lot of ways, schools are very busy so . . . often . . . you don't get a chance to speak to the teacher about the learning that has actually happened. So often they (the teachers) will look in the book, cos we will mark in the book where

the child has had more support than usual . . . we put TAs . . . ask teacher . . . TA assistance or just a little comment really in the book.

In this second example, the sudden removal of text – the ‘behaviour log’ – in the West Midlands High School was perceived as disrupting the network between TAs and teachers as well as causing a sense of alienation from institutional networks on the part of the TAs. Here there was a destabilising of relations and implied undermining of trust, occasioned through a sudden change in practice of which the origins and reasons were unclear:

Marj: . . . you’ve gotta have information. Otherwise you can say the wrong thing or put a discipline in when really you should have been . . . re-adapting the work. You don’t need to know every single petty detail . . .
...

Danni: . . . does anyone know why we don’t have behaviour log anymore?

Marj and Jo: No

Danni: We used to have a copy of the behaviour log in the office which was basically done on a daily basis of any problems concerning children . . . So, again, if there was a problem, you’d know who’d dealt with it so you could go back to the person to refer to. So it was very useful. Suddenly within the last two weeks we don’t have it anymore. So, somebody said ‘Oooh! We don’t have the behaviour log any more. Why not?’ Answer: ‘Can’t tell you’ . . . So we don’t know but we’re not allowed to have it anymore. But nobody’s told us why.

In the same school a further example of destabilised relations and undermined security and trust came from a discussion about the sudden and unexplained removal of text – this time in the form of pupil records – from the TAs as a group.

Marj: . . . we had a rare meeting. And were given information . . . about our Year 6’s that are coming up and who would be working with which child. Really useful stuff. It just sort of said ‘Billy Bloggs, literacy, deaf in one ear, home problems’.

So you'd get a little picture. Just a little indication. . . . So, if I've got him in a certain class I know what to do . . . We were given this and **suddenly** (emphasis) it's **ripped** (emphasis) away from us 'Sorry, you're not allowed to see that information.' . . . Why not? What was in it? (Laughs) What was in there we weren't supposed to see? Did anyone notice anything? Was there anything in there at all that would have been considered . . . because none of us . . . and again it's almost like saying 'I'm sorry, you're TAs, you don't have any confidentiality. You're obviously rubbish'.

Danni: And again it's undermining our professionalism, **again** (emphasis). I think that's being chipped away, isn't it? (Marj and Jo: Yes.) (Marj: Chunked away) Yeh, chunked, and I do feel of late . . . I don't think we're perhaps valued as much as we were.

The linking of text to practice and relations showed its perceived importance in supporting recursive action as well as in enabling the envisaging of future action. The withdrawal of the text meant that recursive action was disrupted and this in turn led to a feeling of unsettled disquiet and insecurity.

In the final example, the presence or absence of a particular text – pupil records - in the sphere of the TAs in the North West High School focus group led the participants to ask questions around trust and their perceptions of their comparative professional standing within their institution. The TAs' discussion was built around references to recursive action, interruptions to it, enduring relationships with pupils over time, the anonymous agency of the 'someone, whoever' (presumably powerful others) and the invocation of another text ('Child Protection' legislation) as ways of explaining their lack of access to knowledge:

Anna: Can I just say one thing that I am quite confused about . . . As I say, I have been in the job for a long time and, you know I'm always confused but in the different schools I have been in it's the access to pupils' records. Now, we are all professionals who work in a professional environment, we work in confidentiality every single day, every lesson and I've always been confused as to whether a TA should have access to pupil records. Even on a day to day basis, even if a pupil comes in with a major problem in a morning, should we know, this is what has happened over the weekend, I don't mean in great detail necessarily, but do we need to know that that pupil's experience is whatever it is over the weekend and because we are working with them one to one, should we know or shouldn't we? Because that happens different in every school I have ever worked in. And I am interested in that one. Should a TA have access to pupil records?

. . .

Ben: But is that not in accordance with general Child Protection? Is it on a need to know basis? But then I suppose it does come back to the 'who', to the general point of this . . . where you have been to and what you will get to learn.

Mary: We usually find out after the event and we think 'Well if we had been told beforehand, this would not have happened' (Anna: Yeah, we could have perhaps helped) if something had happened at home.

Anna: I'm just intrigued by it all, cos I don't actually know, if I am a professional in one sense of the word then why am I not a professional when it comes to . . .

Ben: But, as I was saying, it comes back to whether we are valued or not and it is on a need to know basis and it is obviously classed by someone, whoever, that we don't need to know (Anna: Yeah, it's to do with that again). So it roots back to that doesn't it.

The TAs' discussions of their deployment within their schools and their careers were also framed by reference to some national policy texts designed to influence their deployment and remit directly. The NA (ATL et al., 2003) and resulting rules on the protection of PPA (Planning, Preparation and Assessment) time for teachers and on 'rarely cover' for absent teachers featured in the words of some participants (for example, Jeremy and Helen). Indeed, Phil attributed the career opportunities opened up to TAs directly to the NA and school workforce remodelling agenda. However, running parallel to this textuality of the NA and its aim of rationalising, normativising and demarcating the work of TAs and teachers, there were tensions within and between the networks of TAs and teachers where the policy attempts to reduce teachers' workload and improve their work-life balance were perceived to have resulted in the intensification of TAs' workload and deterioration in their own work-life balance:

It is as though teachers' workload had dropped really and ours has increased.

(Sarah)

. . . you have the interventions, dealing with the specialised work that I do, and all the one-to-one that I do. I can't do what I'm expected to do. It is happening again tomorrow . . .

(Maria)

It's like as if you're working but not quite knowing what you're doing but you get through the day so that's OK. You've done it, you've achieved what you need to achieve.

(Anna)

Pete . . . he's actually gonna be taking classes I believe this year but without the recognition . . . which is a bit tough.

(Marj)

Some participants mobilised ECM (DfES, 2004a) and/or CAF (CWDC, 2009). Jeremy's first interview, for example, contained references to ECM (DfES, 2004a) and how its operationalisation shaped the work (agency) of TAs in his school, generated a need for in-service training (knowledge) and became part of the Ofsted inspection framework to monitor and judge schools. Here the social and material effects included changes in routine, leading to attempts to routinise the results of the change through the application of a framework of measurement / assessment of the degree of success of the change: there was thus an attempt to affect the agency of the TAs through training and assessment. ECM (DfES, 2004a) also had other effects. Eileen showed how the funding attached to ECM had enabled her to develop the provision of an 'Extended School' (new space). In addition to this Eileen was able to interlock the school network with the external networks of 'arts projects'.

CAF (DfES, 2004a:18-19; CWDC, 2009) was identified by some participants as enabling links between networks and as instrumental in the career development of at least one of the participants. In his second interview, Jeremy, for example, talked of the usefulness of the CAF in facilitating meetings (interlocking networks and creating new spaces) through providing a framework for discussing the cases of individual pupils (new knowledge). He also said that the CAF required him to undergo training (develop new knowledge). For Phil, his knowledge of the CAF had opened up promotion opportunities within the LA. On promotion Phil entered a different set of networks and felt that others in his new networks perceived him differently. He contrasts his position as Learning Mentor in school as one where:

(t)he biggest challenge I had when I started was to be accepted by teachers as a non-teacher in a position that they thought should have been held by a teacher. I had to break down barriers

(Phil)

with his current position as LA CAF Coordinator where:

. . . I go into schools as CAF Coordinator (and) no-one asks if I have a degree. They accept you as Chairperson for the group . . . people with thirty-five years' experience - health, education, welfare – they just accept you as you are and that's a nice position to be in.

(Phil)

The areas of planning and assessment generated many references to other textual immutable mobiles in terms of curriculum specifications, planning, testing, as well as the production and management of assessment data.

Eileen in her PDAP1, Marj in WMFG1 and Danni in WMFG1 all used assessment and test results as 'objective' proof of pupils' achievement and/or attainment. They also used them as a way of valorising their own work as TAs within their institutions through reference to the authoritative texts of the National Curriculum and public examinations which are external to their individual institutions.

To successfully transition my current Year 7 into Year 8, ensuring that all students have at least hit an Attainment target in order for them to progress into a higher set

(Eileen)

And we do try and keep them in because the travelling community does tend to leave school in year 10 and we've had success and we've had quite a few that have stayed on for their GCSEs . . . which we consider, you know, as a significant achievement.

(Marj)

You know, the testing proves . . . the testing proves that they have achieved that
(i.e.improved their literacy or numeracy levels to rejoin mainstream classes).

(Danni)

Eileen captured a notion of pupils' fitness for transition to a higher Key Stage and higher ability groups whilst Marj's idea was one of containment of pupils from 'nomadic' families despite themselves. Finally, Danni showed how testing was used to position pupils in either mainstream or SEN groups.

Establishing boundaries and demarcations through references to materials and texts featured in the discourses of the participants to differentiate their work from that of teachers. Thus, the provision of and accountability for achievement and attainment data was just as likely to be used to demarcate the roles of teacher and TAs as it was to valorise the TAs' work.

Jeremy, an HLTA in a secondary Special School, used teachers' responsibility as data managers and their accountability for pupils' results as a reason for his being uninterested in becoming a teacher. He elaborated this division between teacher and TA roles when he contrasted the acknowledged importance of GCSEs (i.e. pupils' results in public examinations) with his own belief that the 'social aspects' of education were more important in his own particular context.

Joanne, a member of the primary North West Focus Group, drew a distinction between teachers and TAs where responsibility for achievement data was concerned. In this instance, the networking in the primary sector with its focus on the class teacher meant that Joanne saw herself as directed by the teacher who also had responsibility for the efficacy of Joanne's own work with pupils. Joanne's concluding comments clearly showed how the shared labour of teacher and TA focused on enabling a child to reach a 'level' had wider institutional implications in

how the school would be 'judged'. The routinising of a relationship between TA, teacher and pupil which resulted from the application of criteria from imported material in the form of levels of attainment from the National Curriculum set up boundaries and demarcations between TA and teacher, and also objectified the pupil as an entity to be changed in order to meet those imported criteria. Ultimately the purpose of these actions is to get the school the best place possible in the 'league':

I think . . . the teachers are more concerned with results . . . and what level their attainment is . . . I don't personally think that's my role. I help and support that child from what the teacher says and if it hasn't worked, I go back to the teacher and say 'Oh, that hasn't worked', but again teachers are constantly updating marks and results and setting new targets, moving onto something else . . . The child didn't have time to digest that learning . . . and I think that the teacher has a harder job, in that that child is not up to that level and we need to get that child up to that level . . . for the school with a place on the league table . .

(Joanne)

Danni, in the first West Midlands Focus Group, used assessment to support the demarcation between teacher and TA roles. Here, however, there was an expression of a temptation to transgress the role boundary and to break routines despite the pay differentials and the implications of professional accountability for undertaking the work:

I just managed to collar one of the maths department to have a meeting with them this afternoon to try and organise, you know, I'm actually thinking we need to be doing baseline assessments. There's an awful lot to be done and, I dunno, somewhere along the way, you, half of you thinks 'Hang on a minute. You know. OK. Am I actually getting paid to be doing this because it is a teaching role. Hang on a minute I'm worried about this because I'm gonna be accountable for this' . . . but unfortunately the other half of me is 'Yeh, great. I want to do this'. (Laughs).

So that's the sort of dilemma.

(Danni)

Danni's temptation to break the routine was occasioned in the context of the planned establishment of a new network of teachers, TAs and pupils in the form of a mathematics 'extract group'.

Another way in which texts could be used as immutable mobiles in the work on boundaries and demarcations came from Eileen. In this case the immutable mobile was in the form of assessment criteria through the establishment of boundaries with the intention of normativising assessment practice across subject departments. Eileen wrote:

. . . follow our assessment Criteria (sic) and work with several departments on ensuring all needs of the students are being met efficiently and effectively.

Interesting for its confusion of assessment with children's needs, the quotation also showed Eileen believed that pupils' needs would be being met through the coordination (normativisation) of others' work according to understandings and interpretations of the criteria: more than this, she believed this would be both efficient and effective.

Texts also provided a framework for action complemented through reference to other texts used as historical sources in order to inform current and future actions through the production of new texts. In this quotation Joan showed how she was planning to develop and exploit networks inside and outside her institution in several ways through the use of texts:

Unit specification of qualifications (we are) hoping to offer – this will enable me to complete long term planning and curriculum mapping as required for the bid . . .

Access to previous bids to give guidance on what information to include.

Here Joan was intending to work with texts to produce further documentation that would be compliant with external requirements, and would be her response to those external requirements. The result would therefore be that her action would bring funding into the school to develop the curriculum in a particular externally determined direction.

In the second of her action plans Joan showed how knowledge and practices in different interdependent local networks could be coordinated through reference to texts imported into her institution. The local networks were the departmental teachers/TAs, and the pupils and their parents. Among the texts she mentioned were the (current) 'Key Stage 4 curriculum', 'the (new) English Baccalaureate', the 'national requirements under the new coalition government', 'results', (the implied text of the) 'Options programme'. Her actions here, informed by intertextual work including the creation of new texts, were intended to manage the availability of curriculum content to pupils in line with government policy frameworks on curriculum content. Joan's mobilisation of texts here therefore demonstrated their use as frameworks for action, causes of change in routine and, in the longer term, as setting up new norms of knowledge for pupils, teachers and TAs. Joan thus presented an envisaged reordering of relations and practices around prescribed curriculum knowledge and access to it.

Collectivities: others and selves

. . . some teachers want you just to be an extra pair of eyes . . . although I think they're few and far between now. And there are some teachers who really do use you well . . . and who don't insult your intelligence and we get a lot more out of those lessons . . . you can get a lot more out of the children . . . then there are other teachers who just turn round and (say) 'I don't want you to help him'. So, what do you do?

(Marj)

Marj's words provide an informative introduction to this section of the chapter. In these few phrases Marj summed up key features of the kinds of relations and practices which were operating between TAs, teachers and pupils. Her underlying belief that TAs are more active in classrooms was generally borne out by the other participants as was her contrast in varying teacher attitudes and practices. She also expressed a generally corroborated view that TAs are there to be 'used' or not by teachers although there was discussion around the 'what' and the 'how' of the kind of 'use'. Finally, the notion of 'getting' something 'out of children' could also be considered as typifying TAs' attitudes towards children.

Thus, this section on describing the discourse examines how the participants express relations practices and their allied values with regard to the principal groups of social actors with whom they interact. Because of the scope of this work and its primary relation to education policy I limit my discussion to the participants' descriptions of their relations and practices with three groups:

- Teachers
- Pupils
- Managers/leaders

Penultimately I attempt to examine how the TAs view themselves as individuals and as a network of workers within their schools in light of the provisions of the NA regarding the training and professional development of TAs, the division of labour in the classroom between teachers and support for teaching and learning, and the kind of regulated supervision operating in relation to the TAs . Finally I move to the conclusion to the chapter to bring the descriptive themes of place, text and people together before moving into an interpretation and explanation of the TAs' discourses.

With the possible exception of their descriptions of practices and relations with pupils, the participants' words revealed instances of dilemma, struggle and resistance in attempting to

stabilise and calibrate their relationships and practices with all the groups in the above list.

Generally their descriptions appeared to reveal instability, and a need to acknowledge context in order to explain the shifting relationships and contingently and contextually amended practices.

With the exception of managers / leaders, other actors were easily identified or formed 'figurations' (Latour, 2005).

Teachers

With regard to teachers the participants expressed a wide range of ambivalent, conflicted, subtle interpersonal, affective and emotional relations which appeared to come into play contingently where location within and in relation to school was concerned, regardless of age-phase or sector. These references to the emotional and affective implied that decisions and agreements on practice took place against this background of accounting for and negotiating round the different values and attitudes that different teachers had towards the work of TAs. Jo and Marj, from the West Midlands high school, discussing their feelings following a parents' evening for the new intake of pupils the following September, generalised about teachers as follows:

. . . And the teachers, I mean, obviously, the teachers are great (Marj: They are. They are a nice bunch). Yes. . . . I don't think there is a 'but', I can't think of a 'but' apart from the money (i.e. salary) . . . it comes down to the money.

(Jo)

Yet the sentiments expressed in this quotation offered a contrast with Marj's opinion at the beginning of this section when she did not give such unequivocal approval to the teachers in her school. Laura from the primary sector, describing her contrasting experiences with different teachers in different year groups said:

. . . again it depends on who you work with, but I think that some teachers value TAs, whereas others . . . and one thing it does solely depend on, who you are working with. . . they treated me as if I were a member of staff and as if I worked

there and they used to listen to all of my suggestions and if they didn't want to use it they would explain nicely why they didn't want to use it and things now . . . I have gone to a different year group and with different teachers and it is completely different. And I think that it is the same in any job, it depends who you work with. I think in terms of whether TAs are valued, it depends on who you are working with really and how they treat you.

(Laura)

Mary and Sharon, both from the North West high school, echoed Laura saying:

Mary: Some (teachers) are brilliant, others won't even give you eye contact or say good morning.

Sharon: Or it is the threat isn't it? If you suggest something they think 'Who are they to do that?' (Mary: Who do you think you are?)

The last comments in Sharon's speech above linked with the participants' descriptions of their working practices with teachers. These descriptions were carried out through comparing, contrasting and coordinating what they understood their respective and complementary roles to be. Notions of relative status, subordination and domination, featured in these comparisons and contrasts:

. . . so the teacher likes to have control . . .

(Marj)

And again:

. . . you're making yourself sort of invaluable to the teacher.

(Marj)

. . . they can actually turn round and say 'Well, actually, that is not your job. You are wrong. You are just here to do what I am giving you to do' . . .

(Laura)

This resulted in a sense that TAs would accept a junior status, provided that teachers demonstrated knowledge and skills that merited their superiority. As instances of these values and attitudes I present the following:

The teacher's role is to teach the CLASS (emphasis), we're teaching the child to learn within that class.

(Marj)

. . . our role is . . . in enabling that child to learn . . . so the teacher is teaching the lesson . . . and we're helping that child to access what the teacher is learning (sic)

. . .

(Danni)

Whilst TAs may often have been at ease with their junior status, they did not feel that teachers were necessarily worthy of their senior status or merited respect (Amy and Jeremy), and Maria and Sharon made the following points:

. . . teachers were teaching and not differentiating lessons and I didn't know anything about it . . . then I've worked with teachers and realised that they have not been good teachers. They have given me work to take out, 'Here you go, get on with this' and then . . . the children aren't able to do it. They have not got the right pencil control or often it is because work is not differentiated.

(Maria)

I think teachers aim for the middle, don't they? If they have got say thirty in the class, they are aiming for that middle ability. You can understand that to a point, but then you think like . . . 'It wouldn't take much to give this planning just a bit of thought, like X number of students can come out, be in the corner and. . . I can

tell the Teaching Assistant what to do . . . and there is some extra resources to go with it'

(Sharon)

On occasion, a note of perceived suspicion or threat on the part of teachers towards the presence of TAs in their classroom was registered where, for example, Marj said:

And there are some teachers, and not necessarily the old-school types, you know some of the new ones . . . who feel as though they're being **watched** (emphasised) by the TA.

Sometimes participants wholeheartedly supported the policy intention of teachers being the senior members of the relationship, particularly in relation to the planning of teaching activities:

I don't do the planning, the teacher has to put the planning in place . . . I'm just there. This is what you do today . . .

(Helen)

I would like to say that I have never planned with a teacher. I have never had any planning.

(Debbie)

I help and support that child from what the teacher says and if it hasn't worked, I go back to the teacher and say 'Oh, that hasn't worked'

(Joanne)

We want the teachers to say, 'This is what you are going to do, this is how you are going to do it' . . .

(Sarah)

Whilst these references could be seen as supporting demarcations between TAs and teachers, there were a small number of occasions on which participants referred to their actual or possible

transgressions of boundaries between TAs and teachers. The first occasion, already discussed above, arose in relation to the establishment of a new 'extract group' for mathematics in the West Midlands high school where Danni relished the challenge of preparing and planning teaching materials. The second occasion occurred in the North West high school where Amy felt she had to step in because a teacher's instruction had left the pupils confused. In the final two cases, Jeremy said that full-class planning and teaching activities are the norm in his setting and Marj presented full-class and group teaching as the norm for some of her colleagues.

The instances of compliance and transgression demonstrate a possible division in understandings and practices between sectors. All the examples of actual or possible transgression come from TAs working in the secondary sector with all the examples of 'policy-conformity' coming from the primary sector. This view is perhaps further reinforced through these words from another TA in the primary sector:

. . . you are given stuff to do and in a lot of cases you just have to try and work with the children and a lot of the times you don't know whether that is right or wrong. (In background: That is not our role). Yes, that is not our role to do.

(Laura)

Judgement of teachers' competence and notions of poor teacher practice entered into the TAs' discussions (for example, Amy). However, Laura's, Helen's and Debbie's discussion indicated that overt criticism of teachers concerning their perceived failures was a boundary in the relationship not to be transgressed and thus protected and privileged the status of the teacher.

Pupils

Relations and practices with pupils appeared to present fewer dilemmas for the TAs. They found it easier to describe and justify their practices with pupils, and they appeared to find it easier to typify or characterise their pupils. These relations and practices could therefore be typified as

more doxic or taken-for-granted than TAs' relations and practices with teachers and managers / leaders. Their words presented several areas of commonality across the primary and secondary sectors, and therefore did not indicate significant variability. Below I attempt to separate out categories from the TAs' words. However, the categories were often conflated in the participants' discussions.

The values underpinning relations and practices with pupils could be interpreted as based around ideas of children as deficient and incomplete, and therefore as necessitating remediation, repair or treatment to enable pupils to conform to the routines of school life. The importance of developing pupils' social skills came from TAs across the sectors (Anna, Jo and Jeremy).

Their values manifested themselves in discourses around various types of overlapping relationships and practices. In the first instance they were couched in discourses of pupil conformity to routines. In this respect Marj made the following contributions:

They (teachers) haven't got time to . . . spend worrying about how Fred is going to settle in the class . . . So having a TA there to sort that out means that that child is being included as opposed to the teacher having to make the decision that Fred is disturbing the learning of the rest of the class . . .

The TA is helping them to be included before they get told off, sent out by the teacher. You're sort of pre-empting. But with the teacher it's very much along the lines of 'Well, I've only got an hour to get this part of the curriculum done with these kids'.

The TAs presented interpretations of the pupils' deficiencies as:

- academic:

. . . but these children don't get the basics and the foundations then they are not going to progress to anything . . .

(Joanne)

- social / behavioural:

. . . she has to have someone with her all the time . . . I thought 'How on earth is this little girl gonna make friends, when she's got me with her all the time?

(Jo)

. . . this child (who) is normally sort of banging against the walls and the ceilings and everything, is suddenly in a quiet room, on a one-to-one, with reader and scribe, and they're getting these amazing results.

(Marj)

- emotional:

PB: . . . what you do is not data-driven? (Mary, Anna: No, no)

Amy: Not at all, it's more emotional

Secondly, the participants used 'inclusion' as an umbrella term for their discourses to give purpose to their practice and presence within schools. The participants' discursive mobilisation of the term 'inclusion' indicated it was a catch-all for a wide range of their work, drawing on a wide scale of contexts and a range of texts, from inclusion in the classroom to inclusion in society after leaving school.

So we are there . . . as part of the inclusion policy. To make sure that all of the children are being involved all of the time and making sure that they are all always engaging in learning . . .

(Laura)

(The TA) can really help include cos you get to know where they're good at academically, where they're good . . . in a more . . . practical sense or artistic

sense, physical sense . .

(Marj)

I'm more focused on the person and developing someone who can be accepted in society.

(Jeremy)

For Joanne inclusion chimed with ECM and CAF as she made one of the few references to multi-agency working and brought together several other texts in one place, and demonstrated the categorisation of deficiency and remediation that can occur:

I do have contact with multi-agencies because . . . I am meeting with the paediatrician, the nurse or carers, the SENCo regarding the IEP or the contact with parents situation, the support that she needs. If that child will need extra testing for . . other things, conditions that are not actually set out in the statement.

Eileen's notion of 'inclusion' was through the 'extended school' and involved linking with other networks, including families, to develop students' skills:

. . . to work along side (sic) the students, parents/carers and the community in ensuring they develop new skills, build confidence through dance and several other activities and be part of a challenging but exciting experience.

(Eileen)

Whilst their relations and practices with pupils ostensibly appeared to be 'child centred', there were several occasions in the findings of the research which indicated an overall purpose to TAs' work of enabling pupils to achieve at 'levels' that would improve the schools' position in the 'league tables' or in improved public examinations results. A comment from the North West high school revealed the presence of immutable textual mobiles as underpinning this dilemma of supporting the pupil but always being conscious of the need for measurable and improving outputs, but hiding purpose from their pupils:

This school is very good for levels in the front of most exercise books (In background: Yes), they have their levels and what they have to achieve to get to a certain level and it is in all the classrooms. There are some behind you there. So we would have a little glance, see what have they got to do to get to the next level . . . but that is more of a private, one to one thing . . . it's not driven by the teacher.

(Mary)

TAs therefore could see their work as part of the 'delivery model' (Howes, 2003) of education. This was a common feature across the sectors. Joanne, from the primary sector, directly linked the role of the TA to enabling pupils' 'progression' and 'getting that child up to that level', whilst Pete, from the secondary sector, was of the opinion that TAs are better placed to enable pupils to attain on higher National Curriculum levels because of their greater knowledge of the pupils.

Marj said in this context of 'delivery':

. . . to try and organise her (the pupil), show her, give her techniques . . . to get her enough points because she needed a 'D' (GCSE public examination grade). . .

An exchange in the North West high school brought many of the themes of the relations and practices with pupils together:

Anna: Giving them (the pupils) the confidence (Mary: Keeping them in the lesson), if you boost their confidence, hopefully their levels will just you know...they will achieve (Ben: Even with confidence we . . .) (Sara: It's the confidence with us, yeah). We have the potential, yeah (Various: Mmmm) (Sara: helping them deal with home and school at the same time which is more of a target) and their organisational skills, we always help with that, there is always an organisational problem.

A concluding reflection on these relations and practices is one of the TA as 'activating' the agency of pupils to conform and perform.

Management / Leadership

Included in this description of the relations and practices between TAs and school leaders/ managers are references to identified actors such as headteachers or middle managers / leaders.

I also include in this section some of the occasions when the TAs identified class or subject teachers' involvement in the direction or coordination of the TAs' work. However, in large part, arriving at a description of relations and practices between TAs and school managers / leaders necessitated some reading of inference into the TAs' contributions because there was often no 'figuration' or naming of management / leadership as such.

Figuration could also vary between participants: Laura, for example, was forthright in her figuration of headteachers as responsible for determining TAs' pay and deployment within schools. The construction of the TAs' language in these passages which did not ascribe responsibility to others became impersonal. They would use anonymous pronouns such as 'they', or the passive voice, for example 'we were told . . . '. On other occasions, the modality of their sentences would betray external compulsion, for example, 'we had to . . . '

The TAs' descriptions of the network effects of management / leadership on their work therefore drew on a wide range of scale that could be traced back to origins in other networks such as national policy, the LA, the school or the individual teacher. Consequently my categorisation of 'management / leadership' is largely an imposition on the TAs' words due to my identification of shared features of the TAs' contributions. I have chosen to subsume this scale under the heading of 'management / leadership' because the relations and practices emerging here from the TAs'

words showed their relational positioning to be such that a direct oppositional response from the TAs would overtly challenge the basis of the relationships within and between the networks. Firstly, the inclusion of TAs in meetings at the departmental / faculty or key stage level of the school showed variations in practice between schools and in the same schools over time (Marj; Sarah; Helen; Sharon, Amy and Mary). These variations in practice prompted variations in attitude. Despite the fact that there appeared to be a general consensus that TAs should be represented at these meetings, there was also a sense that their inclusion might be tokenism or done for appearance sake through comments such as 'it's a paper exercise' (Mary) or 'we are just kind of sat there' (Sarah).

Laura and Maria gave a view of the role of headteachers in the management of TAs. Their views were echoed by others across the focus groups but there the agency was anonymous. Her view was one that saw the management of TAs as localised and *ad hoc*, as the prerogative of the headteacher in decisions about the allocation of human resources. This view in turn was generalised by Sarah into one of exploitation of TAs through an expectation that they would work beyond their contracted hours. Likewise the other two focus groups picked up on this theme of working in non-contracted time (Anna) and an exchange in the West Midlands focus group highlighted out-of-hours working and low pay:

Marj: . . . I don't know if you guys take stuff home?

Pete: Yeh, actually, if I'm pressured

Danni: Which again is a bone of contention because, you know, we're not actually paid (Steve: No) . . . an awful lot to be here, let alone to be doing it at home.

Time and money, as largely anonymous activities of management / leadership, each had significant aspects to them. In the case of time, as well as the expectation discussed above that TAs would work beyond their contracted hours, the management of time during contracted hours

was an issue for TAs across both sectors. This revealed tensions between the taken-for-granted division of the school day and the lack of accounting for the need for teachers and TAs to take time to plan and review their work with pupils:

Danni: . . . it's the time factor thing as well because we all move – as you're trying to have a word with the teacher at the end of the lesson you've got the next lot of children that are coming in and . . .

Marj: And you're being late for your next lesson . . .

Jo: It's a brief word at the beginning of the lesson. (Danni: Yes, if you're lucky.

Pete: If you're lucky)

Marj: Or a brief word at the end of the lesson, saying 'Look that really didn't work' or 'That was fantastic that I actually got him to do some work'

But the sad thing is it (i.e. the attempt to work collaboratively with teachers) is usually in your own time that . . . you are staying behind after school because you think 'Right . . . I need to talk to that member of staff about that pupil before the next lesson' but there is no time allowed for that it is just the fact that we have to . . . you know . . . we have to do it because the next lesson is going to be . . .

(Anna)

Money arose as a topic in four main respects. In these cases, with the notable exception of Laura, agency was largely anonymous and obfuscated or attached to 'government' or 'LA'. Firstly some of the participants expressed concerns at the current and future funding of TA provision in light of recent government spending cuts:

Sharon: Yeh, we've had pay cuts and a pay freeze . . .

Mary: Hours cut...They're trimming it right down . . . They've narrowed it down to 38 weeks . . . you've had days cut, days cut, haven't you? We seem to be the Cinderella of the service because if there's any slight hint of funding cuts, we're the first to go . . . we are the Cinderella of the service.

Sara: It's mentioned in the media, it's like 'Oh, teaching assistants' . . . it's one of the first options that they think 'Right, OK, where can the cuts be made?' And I think teaching assistants is probably near the top of the list.

Sometimes intense workload coupled with low pay featured:

The hourly rate probably wouldn't bother us. It's the fact that we're only paid for the 25 teaching hours . . . in the term time. So . . . what does it work out . . . 42 periods . . . in the year . . . and so that makes it, by the time that . . . we've been paid less than the minimum wage and that's appalling . . . It's appalling for the amount we do . . .

(Marj)

A year later Marj said:

You know sometimes you don't mind (i.e. about being paid at an inappropriately low level) but really you do think . . . 'Come on! It's not easy' . . . we're only paid for the hours that we work, not even the five minutes between the lessons – that's sort of deducted out . . . and only paid term time . . . (F)inancially, it's really tough. It's all right if you've got a wealthy husband and it's pin money. And I think that's what the government, schools and whatever rely on, that the TAs that do this job or . . . people who are willing to be TAs, are just women who really want to be housewives and work the terms.

(Marj)

In the secondary sector focus groups, the government's drive for 'Academy' status for schools with its implications for TAs, their pupils and funding featured. Secondly, the issue of low pay and high expectations of the TAs as a group of workers revealed tensions in all groups across both sectors. Thirdly there was evidence from the West Midlands focus group in particular that funding was currently (July 2011) being pared back to focus on the pupils with statements, with detrimental effects on provision for other pupils, the teachers and unpredictable patterns of deployment for the TAs as they focused on the statemented pupils. Fourthly, the lack of funding and low pay were seen as obstacles to TAs undertaking professional development courses and further study in the secondary sector focus groups.

I have discussed many of the anonymised acts of dominant, arbitrary power emergent from the TAs' above discussions about the effects of the abrupt, unexplained removal of key texts and documents from their network. The TAs' discussions of unpredictability of their day-to-day location within their institutions was often presented as the result of anonymous acts of what they perceived to be dominant, arbitrary power. Sometimes this was in relation to loss of job or a limited contract:

Well I still got finished in the July, didn't I? I had no money through the holidays.

I think it is just mismanagement, but I get on my high horse.

(Mary)

. . . a lot of our colleagues have gone. There were quite a few who were on temporary contracts, taken on in September.

(Marj)

. . . it's almost as if we do such a good job . . . that it's a case of 'Yes, right, push 'em out'. So I feel it a bit at the moment. 'Keep 'em in the dark and . . . like mushrooms'.

(Marj)

Of equal and more general import, the participants, particularly in the primary sector, felt that the unpredictable changes in location were a feature of their working lives and were detrimental to pupils, teachers and themselves. Here is a selection of comments from across the groups:

. . . nobody would go in my place because it's not 'Red' so therefore if I wasn't there or if I'm being used elsewhere he doesn't get any help at all (PB: Right) So, as far as the job of the TA is concerned, one, the kids aren't getting . . . unless they're the ones who are statemented . . . are not getting the support and, secondly, the teachers aren't getting the support as far as being able to do group work or whatever is concerned.

(Marj)

I came in on Monday and I was told that after break 'You are covering class, did you know you were covering class?' And I was like 'No, nobody had mentioned it to me'. And it has turned out to be because of the budget, because of the budget they have no money and so any absences are going to be covered internally by grade fives. But my teacher plans for me in Foundation. So she plans and splits the class and I have a group, she has a group. So if I am not there for a morning she cannot do the lesson. So she has got 30 Reception children, that she cannot do what she has planned to do, but she cannot get through the work she has planned to do.

(Debbie)

. . . every child learns in a different way so if you are set to . . . support the group then how are you supposed to engage them and help them if you are going to be dotted around all over the place. . . You wouldn't expect a teacher to say though 'Next week we are having a swap around with a completely different teacher'. But we are just expected to get on with it . . . really I think that a lot of it is expected

(Laura)

Selves

In this penultimate section describing the discourses of the TAs I turn to examine some aspects of the ways in which the TAs describe themselves as workers within schools. The context for this category is related to three aspects of the NA, namely the training and professional development of TAs, the division of labour in the classroom between teachers and support for teaching and learning, and the regulated supervision operating in relation to the TAs.

There was unanimous support for the principle of training and professional development (PD) for their roles. The participants' definition of training and PD was varied and ranged from one-off events such as 'little, tiny bits (of training in) Visual Support . . . Physical Disability, Hearing Impairment' (Mary) to degree-level higher education (Joan).

The picture of access to different forms of PD was variable, localised and *ad hoc* to the extent that access to PD appeared serendipitous from the extremes of Jeremy and Phil who had access to a wide range of courses over considerable periods of time, to no availability of training (Sharon). Even within the individual schools access to PD and training varied. The findings of this research are skewed as a result of this serendipity. A majority of the participants in the research sample were students on Foundation Degrees¹⁴ whose schools were in PD partnerships either directly or through their LA with a university and who therefore received subsidies for tuition fees. This same serendipity also skewed the results of this research in two respects. Firstly, most TAs nationally did not possess HE level 5 qualifications (Blatchford et al., 2009:112)¹⁵. Secondly, all the TAs from Primary schools in this research were students on a Foundation Degree, whereas the TAs from Secondary schools were a mixture of Foundation Degree students and others, with none

¹⁴ Foundation Degrees = HE level 5 qualifications which offer insights into aspects of pedagogy, education theory and policy

¹⁵ According to Blatchford et al. (2009:112), among TA equivalents, 10% had a Cert. Ed., 7% had a Foundation Degree, 15% had a first degree, and 3% had a higher degree.

of the members of the North West High School Focus Group presenting evidence that they were students on Foundation Degrees. Without making claims to direct cause and effect, these findings could be taken to suggest that the variations in access to PD discussed here were most evident among the secondary TA focus groups as most of these participants were not enrolled on Foundation Degrees.

Alongside their approval of the principle of training and PD and variations in access to it the participants also revealed various levels of satisfaction with the PD they had undertaken., Dissatisfaction and disillusionment with PD and training were evident on five counts and varied across the sample in line with the differences outlined at the end of the previous paragraph. Firstly and educationally, PD courses and programmes such as NVQs were often seen as lacking substantial content or 'learning' with assessment processes being considered inappropriate (Marj and Danni). Secondly, training was often only available sporadically and its availability was sometimes seen to depend on the 'luck of the draw' (Marj). Thirdly, opportunities for engagement in PD were perceived to be declining over time (Anna and Mary). Fourthly, some forms of PD, in particular the competency-based NVQs relating to TA and HLTA status, were not considered worth the investment of personal time because of the poor quality of content and assessment (Danni). Finally, career prospects and increased pay were not seen as naturally resulting from engagement with PD (Laura; Sharon). Indeed the opposite could be the case where school management could exploit those with HLTA status by not paying them the full salaries commensurate with their qualifications (Debbie). These five points all stood in contrast to the policy-promoted vision for the roles and development of TAs as members of the school workforce.

The participants also revealed differences in the purposes to which they put their PD. The purposes ranged from the development of practice-based knowledge following training (Sara) to

PD facilitating promotion (Phil). However, these variations appeared to occur according to focus group and written evidence where greatest access to sustained PD (as through a Foundation degree) could be the determining factor. Hence, PD possibly did not emerge as a significant theme from the North West focus group of primary TAs nor from the written contributions of the secondary TAs because all these participants were students on Foundation Degrees.

Defining successful PD and training revealed the kind of knowledge and skills the TAs valued in their work. Phil related the links between PD and practice: his PD had contained knowledge related to policy implementation such as 'Behaviour and Attendance', and Joan pointed out the policy-related aspects of her Foundation Degree studies as well as the benefits of reflection on practice through a structured 'work-based learning module'. Likewise Jeremy showed how his study of aspects of special educational needs could have helped to develop the practice of his colleagues. There was thus evidence of occasions when policy implementation was being facilitated through PD and training.

For the TAs in the North West high school the *ad hoc* nature of their deployment from year to year meant that they were challenged to know which kind of PD or training might be useful for them:

. . . if I wanted to do something next year I'd like to know NOW (emphasis) 'What can I be doing? What kind of training there is. What kind of courses can I take now to stand me in good stead for another job that might come up?' But there's nothing. Every teaching assistant interview seems to be asking for something different. So, you don't actually know what to aim for. There's no aim, you know . . . It's very cloudy, isn't it? . . . It's a case of if we knew what was expected of us and if we had the training we could be such an asset.

(Anna)

The definition of their work and the division of labour in the classroom were discursively very active and contested in the participants' descriptions. The participants presented a variety of views on their work with children, how that work differed from that of the teacher, and whether the work they did work could or should be considered teaching. Some participants were in no doubt that they were teaching:

. . . I know a lot of us feel that we do teach. Because the teacher relays the lesson to the class and most of our pupils . . . haven't quite understood, so you are actually . . . differentiating and then you re-teach and then, . . . they might get it or they might not, so then you have got to think of another way of doing it.

(Anna)

Q4

Do you feel that your work is seen by others as on the margins of the work of teaching and learning?

A4

It's stuck in the middle not on the fringes. A colleague is HLTA maths specialist and regularly teaches and plans and I do similarly.

(Jeremy)

I think even if you do an IEP¹⁶ with them you are teaching. Because it is you and that child.

(Joanne)

¹⁶ IEP = Individual Education Programme: for more information visit <http://www.teachingexpertise.com/e-bulletins/individual-education-plans-ieps-are-they-useful-2191> Accessed 1 September 2011

In contrast to the last comment, larger scale defined the difference between teaching and other than teaching for some participants:

The teacher's role is to teach the CLASS (emphasis), we're teaching the child to learn within that class.

(Marj)

. . . that is the idea for us to help to improve standards cos obviously teachers couldn't continue to spend a lot of time with the groups that weren't achieving. And to get the children to achieve, they realise that they couldn't do it, they need to have more people in the classroom to help with class support and that has come from the government, so it has been about support.

(Sarah)

For Jo, in an exchange with Marj, about defining teaching, scale in terms of the number of children as well as the duration of TA support, together with her own lower level of education (compared to a qualified teacher) as well as the provision of prepared teaching materials were all important in differentiating her work from that of a teacher. Equally scale might make no difference (Laura) but knowledge of the child differentiated the TA role from that of the teacher (Pete; Tom and Amy).

Some of the participants' comments were also noteworthy for the euphemisms they employed for the word 'teach' to make their work with children other than teaching. Such phrases included 'work', 'support', 'going over what the teacher has done', 'putting it in smaller steps for them', 'take him out and go over it again'.

Anna and Mary felt that there was no choice in the matter or room for euphemisms about teaching or not teaching, and that TAs were positioned with children in a classroom so one's action was consequently to teach.

As can be seen above there was evidence of increasing and intensifying workloads for TAs, further evidence of this came from Sarah and demonstrated both the power of the headteacher and common-sense justification for allowing the intensification:

. . . if the Headteacher asks you to do something then you will do it, cos at the end of the day you are there for the school and the community, but it does seem to be getting to a point now when you are being asked to do more really than you should really be doing.

To which Sarah later added:

. . . now we have got things like intervention programmes to do with the children that need . . . I am doing all that now really (Debbie: It is because we get a different type of child in) (In background: It is inclusion). It is pressure from the government which says that we have to perform to a certain standard within a certain time and at any point in any Key Stage. This child is there, it has got to get there. I think the pressure is there.

Alongside the intensification, some TAs (such as Pete, WMFG) were teaching full classes, a point also made by Helen to underline the fact that TAs teaching full classes did not have the same level of support as teachers:

. . . every Thursday, I do year 6 by myself all day, now I don't get anyone with me, and they are like 'Who are we having to support us today?' (In background: That's it and TAs...) and I'll say, 'Well, hold on I am a TA and I am by myself' and all the teachers have got a TA, but I haven't and I'm only a TA.

In stark contrast to the policy intentions of the NA, with its stress on the importance of 'standards frameworks' (ATL *et al.*, 2003:4), participants' descriptions of regulated supervision or performance review (PR) or appraisal by teachers and others revealed localised, patchy practice within the secondary sector schools.

References to the professional and vocational standards (TDA, 2007a and b) tended to feature in the work of the participants relating to their Foundation Degrees (Laura; self-consciously for Joan) rather than as frameworks for their day-to-day practice (Helen). The localised practice resulted in feelings of insecurity and perceptions of a lack of linkage with other networks in the school across the focus groups.

Participants did not appear to be averse to PR *per se*, but there was evidence that the process of PR, as far as any process could be said to exist, was seen as pointless in the North West secondary focus group: a point amplified in this exchange in the West Midlands high school with its references to an uneven approach:

Pete: The only thing we have is appraisal (PR) (Danni: Yes, yes). But they don't say how well you're doing. (Marj: They don't say how well you're doing. Danni: No) Danni: No, unfortunately no there is no feedback.

Jo: Do you know, I've just had my first one and I asked for some and I got some.

Danni: Did you get some?

Jo: I did

Danni: Well done . . .

. . .

Danni: Obviously depends on who does your appraisal. (General laughter) I'm saying nothing . . . I'm saying nothing.

More general laughter

. . .

Marj: The appraisal system, I would say, is . . .

Pete: SUCKS (Emphasis)!

Marj: Yeh

Pete: Sucks! Just make sure you heard it (Looks at PB). Crap! Dreadful (sotto voce).

PR did not arise as an issue for discussion in the North West focus group of Primary TAs despite a higher level of awareness of the professional and vocational standards (TDA, 2007a and b). Here I venture a tentative explanation for PR not featuring as an issue. Earlier in this chapter I remarked on the centrality of teachers in determining the differing location of TAs in the Primary and Secondary sectors. Because Secondary TAs' work is generally carried out in relation to several teachers, PR may require a more 'formal' structure such as line management. Adopting this kind of approach would then also mirror the organisation of TAs into SEN or 'Nurture' departments prevalent in the interview sample and then further mirror the general organisation of Secondary schools along departmental lines. Conversely, TAs in the Primary sector generally carry out their work in a relationship with one teacher and therefore may feel that their performance may be monitored more informally, or at least that the close in-class relationship means that the TA has a ready point of referral and consultation.

The three aspects of PD and training, division of labour, and regulated supervision revealed wide variations within and between schools. As a result TAs' attitudes reflected this lack of commonality and led to feelings of alienation and lack of connectedness with wider networks within their schools. In two of the chosen aspects, namely PD and PR, the primary TAs gave evidence of different experiences and attitudes. I posited the view that these differences may result from differences in relational location between TAs and teachers in the two sectors, with

the secondary sector perhaps requiring more formalised systems of PR. In the case of PD, the differences between the primary and secondary focus groups could be accounted because the primary TAs were all students on Foundation Degrees – a point borne out by the effect of PD on the work of TAs implicit in the written contributions from the secondary TAs enrolled on Foundation Degrees.

Conclusion

Using the TAs' own words enabled me to establish categories and themes to shed light on how they see their schools, their colleagues, their pupils and themselves . My description of their discourses indicated areas both of stability and of struggle in their relations and practices within their schools. The TAs' relations and practices with pupils appeared stable in the sense that they deployed their MR to categorise pupils as 'deficient' and their practices as forms of 'remediation'. The purpose of their work was less stabilised. Here they drew on a wide range of MR which I categorised as 'inclusion' in a variety of senses. Within their discussions of the purpose of their work with pupils was a sense that part of their 'remediatory' work was to enable pupils to progress through levels in the National Curriculum or achieve higher grades in public examinations thus securing better 'outcomes' for their schools.

I drew on the notion of immutable and combinable mobiles in the form of text, citing several examples of how the participants deployed text to help to stabilise and calibrate their worlds. In these instances the texts were used to support action, opinion or judgment. I used text as an example of a resource at the disposal of the participants circulating in the networks and contrasted the presence and withdrawal of text as illustrative of the effects of texts on agency and subjectivity.

School as composed of role- and status-delineated spaces and places also appeared stabilised in the TAs descriptions. This was particularly strong in the sense of classrooms as teacher spaces where descriptions of the activities and movements of TAs within classrooms were subordinate to the presence of the teacher. The places where TAs worked with children without teachers were seen and categorised as other than classrooms.

Unstable features of the TAs' relations and practices emerged in their discussions of their work with teachers, with differences emerging between the primary and secondary sectors. Some TAs put considerable amounts of discursive work into the differentiation of their roles and activities to show that they did not 'teach': equally other participants were unequivocal in expressing a view that they were 'teachers'. They also worked discursively on attitudinal expressions of judgement on the comparative efficacy and complementary effects of their work. Some participants employed their discourse to distinguish teachers' preoccupation with measurable progress and the monitoring of pupils: on the other hand other participants revealed that their work was ultimately just as concerned with enabling the measurable achievement and attainment of pupils. However, deference to the status of teachers and an awareness in the discrepancies in pay and conditions of employment between the two groups indicated that some of the TAs were prepared to put limits on their work, particularly in terms of scale (the numbers of pupils they would support at any one time) and their unwillingness to surrender non-contracted time.

The TAs' discourse also revealed evidence of localised and ad hoc practices that varied between schools. This manifested itself, for example, in terms of access to PD and PR processes: indeed, these practices often varied within the individual secondary schools. It was noteworthy that PD and PR did not emerge as issues in the primary sector focus group and I pointed to differences in the nature of the group as well as differences in the spatial relationships between primary and secondary TAs and teachers as possible reasons for this. From these aspects of the descriptions

one gained a sense of alienation and separation between the secondary TAs themselves as well as from other adult networks in the schools. In addition, the deployment of the TAs varied across schools in both sectors, often with unexpected changes in routine resulting in feelings of dislocation and disruption. It was also noteworthy that these dislocations were more remarked upon in the primary sector: again, this was perhaps due to the differences in the spatial relationships between primary and secondary TAs and teachers.

Instability and struggle manifested themselves with regard to the relations and practices of managers / leaders, with some examples of the exercise of dominant and authoritarian power. Managers / leaders were sometimes anonymous and lacked figuration in the words of the participants resulting in a sense of actions being done 'to' them rather than 'with' them, or in the sense of being at the 'mercy' of unattributable events. Because managers / leaders were not 'figured' the struggle here was less focused and more generalised in comparison to the struggle over definitions and differences between teachers and TAs.

Chapter 6: Interpretation and explanation

Introduction

The intention of the last chapter was to establish descriptive categories and themes from the words of the participants in the research. In line with my broad adoption of Fairclough's (2001) approach to CDA/CLA I move now from description to interpretation and explanation. Following Fairclough (2001), I allow for flexibility between these aspects of analysis, having already discussed the differences and connectedness between interpretation and explanation in Chapter 4. Through interpretation and explanation I bring together the categories and themes established in Chapter 5 and examine them in light of the theoretical and methodological tools explored in Chapters 3 and 4.

This chapter builds on my engagement with the following purposes of this thesis:

- to give 'voice' to a number of TAs across a small range of educational settings;
- to examine the discourses of my participants for indications of the effect of policy on the shaping of their professional identity, subjectivity and agency;
- to gain insights into where my participants locate themselves in relation to each other and other networks in education;
- to gain insights into how my participants define their roles and how they describe the work they do;
- to identify similarity and variation in the participants' discourse(s) across a small range of educational settings.

The chapter develops the categories and themes established from the TAs' words to address the following research questions:

How is 'policy' evident in the discourses, descriptions and discussions of my participants? How does 'policy' shape the subjectivity and agency of my participants? Do other factors than policy shape the subjectivity and agency of my participants?

Do the participants' discourses, descriptions and discussions vary between and within sites?

What do the words of the participants reveal about them as knowledgeable subjects and agents, and about the 'educational environments' within which they work? What are the implications of this?

Is there evidence of the operation of relations of power? What are the implications of these relations?

Maintaining the centrality of the words of the participants is a key aspect of interpretation and explanation. Continuing my relativist and constructivist approach, this time through interpretation and explanation, I take the words of the participants and use them as a framework for an understanding of their actions, states of being and the knowledge they created or deployed to give meaning to the social situations in which they found themselves (Bruner, 1990, 1991, in Bakhurst and Sypnowich 1995). To do this I build on Fairclough's (2001) idea of MR and Latour's (2005) ANT to examine how the participants' words established commonality and difference between and across sites, how they ordered, (de)stabilised and calibrated their ongoing experiences of their working lives, what knowledge this generated, what they created/alterd or sustained, and what remained problematical and contested in their understandings of their situations. In my explanation I therefore move on to explore some tentative and possible reasons through referral to the theorists', writers' and the participants' words and explore aspects of ideologisation as way in which the participants come to terms with, make their way through and know their world.

I have interpreted the words of the participants as revealing relationships with several actor-networks. These networks emerged from the participants' categorisations of groups of human agents in different and shifting spatial and temporal relationships. The networks that emerged were generally based around 'figurations' of identifiable agency (Latour, 2005). To recap from Chapter 5: the networks of teachers, pupils, and TAs tended to be clearly identified figurations whilst there was the less-well figured network of 'managers/leaders' under which category I took the liberty of subsuming school managers/leaders, national and LA policy makers, as well as aspects of teachers' practices that could be considered management / leadership in relation to the work of the TAs.

An examination of the relationships and connections between the categories established in Chapter 5 as the participants 'ordered' their experiences and thoughts is used to give critical insights into the overall social situations of the participants. Key throughout this endeavour is participants' 'knowledge': their knowledge manifested itself in both the taken-for-granted aspects of their working world as well as in the aspects of that world which they problematised and struggled over - aspects of their world.

Space and place

Space and place emerged as a significant category across the research sites. I interpret the instances I cited of the TAs' persistent, habitual location and action within their schools as historically and culturally conditioned institutional spaces and places. The habitual location and action of the TAs (and of teachers and school managers / leaders in placing TAs in those locations) together with the allied discourse about their actions in different institutional spaces and places led them to imbue classrooms and teachers with particular significance as axes around which the 'flow' of teaching and learning took place. The TAs were therefore part of networks operating in

differentially role- and status-demarcated spaces within their institutions. This practical and discursive demarcation of space along with the representations of the actors and actions within them contributed to the way the TAs ordered and understood their working lives, giving them some knowledge on how they might successfully conduct themselves.

Differences relating to space and place were evident between the two sectors. Whilst the secondary TAs demonstrated how habitual re-locations throughout the school day meant that they could not enter into extended conversation with teachers, the participants from both sectors generally took for granted the division of space in schools into classrooms and 'other places'. Where the primary sector TAs were concerned, their relocation appeared to be less predictable and more peremptory, potentially changing on a day-to-day basis. Changes of location in both sectors can be seen to result from historical, embedded and taken-for-granted organisational and spatial differences (Gramsci, 1974; Billig, 1995) between the two sectors.

One might therefore posit the view that actor-networks of TAs, pupils and teachers form and re-form according to location within the space of the schools. Within classrooms the actor-network is a tripartite one of teacher, TA and pupils, with the teacher taking the senior role in teaching and directing learning. A principally bipartite actor-network is formed between TAs and pupils in places other than classrooms. Whilst the demarcation of place within schools was discursively mobilised by the participants, it was not problematized but remained part of the doxa of what a school is and what happens there.

Two observations need to be made at this point. The first one concerns time. Just as the places and spaces of school were taken for granted by the participants, so too was the division of the school day into discrete portions of time. However, time, or rather the lack of it, was discursively mobilised on at least two counts. Firstly it was used as a reason for the difficulty of forming

collaborative and cooperative relationships between TAs and teachers either because of the regular movement of TAs and pupils from classroom to classroom in the secondary sector, or in the amount of work to be done within apportioned time in the primary sector. Time was also used as a means to problematise the conditions of employment and pay of TAs in both sectors. In this regard, one TA (Marj) pointed out that the TAs in her school were paid only for the contact time with pupils and that this excluded the five-minute transfer time between lessons. It appeared to be a general feature of the employment of the TAs across both sectors that they were paid only for the hours they worked. The division of time within schools and the purposes to which that division was put in relation to the conditions of pay and employment of the TAs meant that the TAs were effectively 'excluded' from schools except when pupils were present.

The second observation relates to immutable mobiles and their use to link the tripartite and bipartite actor-networks. The TAs' and pupils' use of immutable and combinable mobiles in the form of 'interventions', curriculum packages, assessment and achievement data outside classrooms all represented ways in which the curriculum and its outcomes were exported from the classroom to the TAs' places. In this sense, an additional 'party' can be added to the tripartite and bipartite actor-networks. Indeed, following Latour's approach to actor-networks, the immutable and combinable mobiles provided connections with management / leadership networks in the schools and also with the actor-networks of policy makers beyond the schools.

'Immutable and combinable mobiles': circulating resources

My proposition of the circulation of resources within and between networks and in physical spaces, particularly in the form of actual or implied text, led to the identification of instances where text was (or ceased to be) deployed as a means of affecting relations and practices within and between the networks, or indeed, of affecting the internal stability of a network. Latour termed these resources 'immutable and combinable mobiles' (Latour, 2005) which have the effect

of linking or decoupling networks and of demonstrating the effect of power through changing a state of affairs (Latour, 2005). Texts were pivotal in the participants' descriptions and discussions of social relations and practices. In this regard, I cited examples of how the withdrawal of texts from the network of the TAs had led to feelings of insecurity relating to their knowledge of pupils as well as to their 'professional' standing within their schools.

The adoption, creation, circulation and adaptation of texts can be generalised under the term 'shared knowledge' in so far as text provided a means for importing and exporting resources from and to other networks, as well as for mediated and continued circulation within the immediate network of the TAs, and in assisting the mediation of agency and change. The importation of knowledge was notable where the policies of ECM and CAF were concerned and of their effects on individuals, networks and spaces. To return to Eileen for a moment, her mobilisation of ECM, for example, had the effect of enabling change in routines and of providing a framework for her own agency. Eileen's exercise of her agency included the new linking of networks. Whilst there may appear to be a considerable exercise of autonomy in this example of agency, the overriding conditioning of agency rests with the immutable mobile of ECM and its determination of the kinds of agency it facilitates. It is equally important to recognise here the intertextuality of policies since ECM's influence on agency and knowledge is supported through its conjunction with the influences of other immutable mobiles such as the Ofsted *Framework for Inspection*, or the documentation attached to the funding process designed to support ECM.

Strong evidence of immutable mobiles and intertextuality as giving a basis for and resulting from agency, relations and practices emerged from the areas of planning and assessment. Here the immutable mobiles were curriculum specifications, planning documents, testing regimes and documents, all of which led to action with pupils and teachers, as well as to the production and

management of assessment data. The participants drew discursively on these resources to set up, maintain and/or transgress boundaries between themselves and teachers, to forge links with other networks such as between departments within school or with external bodies such as public examination boards, or to align their own institution with similar institutions nationally through, for example, the 'school league tables'. The participants' words demonstrated a taken-for-granted, unquestioning acceptance of the use of achievement and attainment data through words such as 'success' and 'the testing proves', and 'you know'. In addition, these words expressed values in terms of the participants' experiences and relations with teachers and pupils in maintaining a 'delivery model' of education supported by reference to texts imported into and mediated within their networks. The participants' expression of experiential and relational values with regard to the assessment of pupils showed normativising judgements on 'remediating' pupils' deficiencies through demarcations between their pupils and other pupil groups. Referral to texts to facilitate judgement and remediation of pupils was a means by which the TAs calibrated and stabilised their work against external 'objective' criteria.

Concatenations of mediating agents: performative pupils and subjective dilemma for TAs

Latour wrote:

. . . places do not make for a good starting point, since every one of them are framed and localized by others . . .

(2005:195 – 196)

My preceding section on the circulation of immutable mobiles illustrated how textual resources were deployed to maintain or alter the 'local' as a place where agency is carried out. In the discussion I identified some unproblematised, taken-for-granted aspects of texts circulating in the networks which the participants drew on to support their categorisation and their attempts at the 'remediation' of pupils' 'deficiencies'. In the section before last I noted how places and spaces as the 'local' provide differentiated contexts within which agency is carried out and between which

immutable mobiles can be imported and exported. In this section I propose a view of the coming together of the mediating agencies of TAs and teachers to 'activate' the agency of pupils to 'perform' in the production of the measurable outcomes of primary and secondary education. I outline how the TAs mobilised a wide range of textual resources to support their agency.

To support this view I take the distinctions and similarities the participants drew in the discussions of their own work and that of teachers. In Chapter 5 I remarked on the categorisations of deficiency that the participants mobilised in order to describe their pupils, and where the TAs showed concern to help their pupils to overcome, or at least to come to terms with, the social, intellectual, emotional and health problems they experienced. In many instances the TAs expressed values that put their social and emotional work of remediation above the 'academic'. At the same time many of the TAs expressed a view that pupils' 'academic' development and work, its measurement, pupils' progression and targets were the main concern of the teacher, with teachers tasked to produce results that would show the school in the best possible light in the 'league tables'. However, across the focus groups and in written evidence from, for example, Joanne, Marj, Mary, Eileen, and Sarah, the participants also showed how their remediation of their pupils' 'conditions' was intended to enable pupils to demonstrate improved 'outcomes' as measured by tools such as National Curriculum 'levels', or public examinations results. Sometimes, as in the case of Jeremy, the work of remediation was also intended to enable pupils to re-join their peers in the classroom. To support them in this work of remediation the participants drew upon a range of textual resources provided by 'special needs' policies, ECM, CAF, SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning), curriculum 'packages' and 'prescribed' (teaching) interventions.

From a Latourian perspective, the interpretation and explanation of this concatenation of agency between TAs, teachers and pupils presents as an actor-network assemblage of people, places and

immutable and combinable mobiles the purpose of which is to alter the state of affairs pertaining between the pupils and the externally determined measures of success, and where the effect is the mediated exercise of power. The obvious exercise of power is one of dominance between the teachers and TAs over the pupils mediated in the spaces and places of the school over time. The less obvious exercise of power is through the deployment of TAs' agency justified through the banal acceptance of those spaces and places together with the importation and mobilisation of the textual resources to effect 'remediation' and measurable outcomes. These outcomes then become an immutable and combinable mobile in the form of the school's 'results' fed back into the networks of schools, policy makers and state mechanisms for the monitoring of education such as Ofsted.

There is also a complementary interpretation and explanation to be drawn from this: it relates to the subjectivity of the TAs. Returning to the discursive work the TAs undertook to compare and contrast themselves with teachers, the perception of the TAs that teachers were concerned with results, targets and data, and with the mass of children in their classes can again be noted: that is to say, teaching emerged as a question of large scale and direct external accountability. Where the TAs' own engagement with pupils was concerned, the scale was variable, and direct external accountability did not feature except as something undesirable and to be avoided (e.g. Jeremy). Yet the TAs did give evidence that they felt they were 'teaching' and, more than this, that the kind of work they undertook could not be done by teachers because the TAs knew the children better and worked more closely with them. From a Brunerian and dilemmatic perspective (Billig *et al.*, 1988) the conflict might be seen as arising for the TAs from both attempting the remediation of pupils' 'conditions' as well as from enabling the pupils' measurable performance in terms of curricular outcomes. This dilemma could be seen in the textual resources they draw on and which fell into a range of categories covering the social, emotional, behavioural, as well as the curricular.

The obfuscation of ubiquitous power and being 'lost'

There's this lost area . . . And that makes you feel like . . . well really, you are on the hoof, aren't you?

(Sharon)

. . . I think there is a kind of imbalance really, like something has gone wrong really, we are just kind of pushed aside really . . .

(Laura)

In the previous section I advanced a view of the coupling of the powerful and identifiable ('figured' Latour: 2005) agencies of teachers and TAs as instrumentalising pupils in the production of the outcomes of education as it is currently constructed. It could be argued that the above discussion demonstrated a 'successful' or relatively 'tight' actor-network assemblage of people, places and resources which was readily identified by the TAs in the research. In addition, from the perspective of illuminating subjectivity, I attempted to show how the linking of the agency of the TAs with the teachers and the pupils might be interpreted as a source of their dilemma around their identity of (not) teaching.

In this section I offer a contrasting view where the picture painted by the TAs is in stark contrast to the rhetoric and intentions of the NA. There is scant evidence of a remodelled school workforce including TAs enjoying the benefits of enhanced status, access to training and development with managers / leaders committed to ensuring the realisation of the policy vision.

Here the TAs present themselves as actors within networks where the figurations of the agency of others are less clear, more diverse, and even anonymous. In Chapter 5 I included these agencies under the heading of managers / leaders. I gave this 'umbrella' heading because the cited

agencies of others provided instances where the effect of the perceived or actual exercise of agency was one of power over the TAs. The effect of this power is to place the TAs in subordinate subject positions (Fairclough, 2001:132) in relation to these other agencies. The TAs' lack of consistent figuration / identification of the agency of others gave an impression of their feeling caught at points where these agencies intersected with their own to fix them in positions of impotence, or to stultify their ability to contribute more fully to the work of their schools and to feel more fulfilled as educators.

The instances of the powerful agency of others surfaced at several points across the focus groups regardless of sector, and I have already discussed the powerful agency of managers / leaders in deciding the location of TAs. Other instances of powerful agency led to a sense of ever-present insecurity whether in terms of continuing employment (Anna and Mary; Marj), expendability (Mary; Marj), insignificance (Sharon; Laura and Debbie; Danni), pay and duties (Maria; Danni), or at the unpredictable beck and call of managers / leaders (Laura, Debbie, Maria; Pete; Danni; Ben). Insecurity as a result of the powerful agency of others also manifested itself in the TAs' sense of a stultified and incomplete 'professionalism'. As discussed in Chapter 5 under 'Selves' the TAs in the secondary sector regarded features of current aspects of 'professionalism' such as PD and PR as generally desirable: PD and PR did not emerge as significant themes in primary sector focus group. However, the secondary sector TAs' access to, inclusion in and benefit from PD and PR were very varied, *ad hoc* and serendipitous, even within individual schools and they attributed them to various agents such as 'funding', 'they', 'the headteacher', 'upper echelons' and so forth.

Ideology: banality, doxa and dilemmas

After identifying, describing and discussing the categories established in discourse, Fairclough's (2001) and Potter and Wetherell's (1987) frameworks for the analysis of discourse lead to the phase of examining the ideologies reflectively and reflexively formed through the individual's

engagement with her/his world. In Fairclough's (2001:138) final stage of explanation, all MR are regarded as ideological. Drawing on their MR (Fairclough, 2001) the TAs offered insights into ideologisations of their working life and their positions within it. Their ideologisations were fragmented and context bound, revealing banal (Billig, 1995), doxic (Gramsci, 1971) and dilemmatic (Billig *et al.*, 1988) aspects. Both the banal and the doxic can be regarded as representing those areas of the TAs' ideologisations which showed common-sense, unproblematised assumptions about aspects of their workplaces and the people, including themselves, who populated them. Across the sites and the written evidence the banal, doxic and dilemmatic were not constant. Indeed within individual focus groups and from individual members of those groups the same categories could be presented as alternately banal, doxic or dilemmatic, dependent on the theme of the discussion and on the representation which were being discursively mobilised.

In the context of this explanatory phase of analysis I take the banal as representing those areas of the TAs' lives which might be described as the backdrop for their habitual and repeated actions and with reference to which their discourses were carried out and their lives were lived. Their iterative engagements with places, things and people can be seen as 'flagging' (Billig, 1995:6-9) or 'reminding' the TAs of their 'place' within their institutions. Throughout the focus groups and in many of the written pieces, the TAs' words gave persistent and embedded ideas of the school as a series of demarcated spaces where practices of status and power were performed, with classrooms 'flagged' as teacher spaces. Within classrooms in the presence of teachers the TAs performed subordinate roles, occupying spaces alongside children, and 'going to' or moving into the teacher's space in the classroom. Their representations of teachers within classrooms showed the teachers occupying positions of command, direction or control (e.g. Marj; Laura; Mary). Similar demarcations and 'flaggings' of the 'abstract' space of the actor-networks of departments and key-stage meetings can be read into the presence or absence, *viz.* the

inclusion/exclusion by powerful others, of TAs in these teacher-dominated places and networks. Teachers and their spaces therefore came to be recognised as the centre around which teaching, learning and allied practices revolved.

Texts can be seen to represent further 'flagging'. To frame aspects of their work the TAs drew on some policy texts such as the NC (QCA, 2007), ECM (DfES, 2004a), unspecified SEN documentation, and unspecified 'inclusion' documentation. This 'flagging' was particularly applicable to the positioning of pupils in relation to the TAs and their practices with them. In my comments and observations above I have shown how the TAs made allusions to these kinds of texts in order to categorise pupils' needs and to provide measurable outcomes from their work. Indeed, the mobilisation of notions of 'deficiency' and the discursive mobilisation of the catch-all of inclusion together with recourse to 'measurable outcomes' could be interpreted as 'flagging' the delivery and outcome model of education as constructed in England. Moreover, the mobilisation of specified and unspecified policy texts could also be seen as providing a link with the teachers and 'common ground' in the mutual actions with children. Above I interpreted this common action, or the complementary agencies of TAs and teachers, as harnessing the performative agency of children to produce the measurable outcomes of the education system.

In the above paragraphs I have explored place and text as providing 'flags' or reminders to give the TAs an underpinning stable ideological framework on which to base, or through which to explain, major features of their relations and practices. I now move on to explore doxic aspects of their ideologising, advancing a view that there is some overlap between the banal and the doxic, and at the risk of setting up binary oppositions. Here my differentiation between the banal and the doxic is a differentiation between the external and the internal. The banal reflects an ideology resulting from the iterative engagement with the external as place and text as 'flags' and reminders of the parameters for agency: the doxic reflects an ideology resulting from the iterative

mental engagement to establish the parameters for language in relation to agency. Whilst the TAs presented ideas that were discursively active, those ideas were not necessarily simultaneously problematised by the TAs. Above (Chapter 5) I argued that the TAs' attitudes to pupils was a case in point of a generally doxic ideologising of relations, practices and positions. I have also demonstrated that the TAs could appear 'at ease' in their relations with teachers as the 'senior partners' in the relationship where decisions on types of individual support, planning or 'teaching' were concerned and those promoted a view of an often taken-for-granted relationship.

However, themes from the banal and doxic could also feature in the dilemmatic when the themes were juxtaposed. The banal and doxic ideologisation of what a school is and what happens there became dilemmatic and problematised when the relations and practices with school managers / leaders were brought into the discussion. Here the problematisation centred on the disruptive effects on collaboration and cooperation caused when TAs relocated themselves as a result of the routinised practices of school managers / leaders either in managing space, time and the circulation of bodies in the secondary sector, or in managing the short-term, contingent and expedient deployment of TAs in the primary sector. Thus, dilemmas around practices and relations with pupils emerged when the TAs compared and contrasted their own and teachers' work with pupils as well as the relationships between pupils and teachers. Here the ideological dilemmas centred around TAs' attempts to draw distinctions and distinctiveness between the roles, and comparisons and contrasts in status and pay between teachers and themselves. Dilemmas around amounts and types of work as well as hours of work could also find ideological resolution through representations of work as 'duty' for the common good of the school or the children. Equally dilemma could be resolved and justified through a doxic 'It's our job' (Marj), 'We've done our job' (Pete) or 'That is not our role' (Laura).

Returning to the research question of how policy is evident in the discourses of the participants I conclude that policy was evident as one among a number of resources that the TAs drew on to support their positions in relation to each other, to teachers, managers / leaders and children. In some instances specific policies, such as the NC, enabled the TAs to align their work with teachers and children with a sense of common purpose. At other times, policies such as CAF and ECM relating to the intellectual, social, economic and health conditions of pupils might be used to enable the TAs to show not only how they furthered the work of the school but also how these other policies could be used to show how TAs were different from teachers. Much of the time the policy-determined construction of education as seen, for example, in age-defined groupings, separate sectors (Key Stages and the primary / secondary divide), and classrooms were not overtly questioned, remaining banal and doxic. Whilst the TAs did not appear to question a division between QTS and non-QTS educators in schools, they used policies on pay and remit as resources to question the sharp differences in remuneration and to attempt to put a limit on the work they were prepared to do.

Similarly, an exploration of the role of policy in the shaping of the participants' subjectivity reveals a range of areas where they felt different degrees of tension or ease in their situations and relations with teachers, managers / leaders and children. The TAs' subjectivity could thus be seen to vary contextually according to their involvement in relations and practices. The greatest sense of 'ease' was shown in relation to children. In discussing their work with children notions of 'inclusion' were often cited as a TA's *raison d'être*, with this often framed in relation to policies such as ECM, CAF, NC and mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation. The TAs' subjectivity in relation to teachers appeared to vary according to the context of place, as the classroom, and with regard to the location of children in classrooms and places other than classrooms. Subjectivity in relation to managers / leaders also varied according to context and purpose, with TAs sometimes pinpointing tensions about their role resulting directly from (lack of) management

decisions; at other times the participants could resolve tensions around the lack of clarity through consideration of and acquiescence to the 'good' of the school.

Chapter 7: Conclusions, recommendations, reflections

Introduction

In this final chapter I subdivide my conclusions by looking at three aspects of this work:

- The social, economic and political: a consideration of my findings and suggestions for further enquiry, and a question or two about the future;
- The theoretical and sociological: a consideration of my methodological and theoretical approach;
- Reflections, reflexivity, and the analyst/researcher as an ethical subject: a consideration of the experience of undertaking this enquiry.

This chapter therefore also engages with the following research purpose:

- to conclude with a consideration of my findings because they can be considered to come at the end of a particular 'era' in education policy and practice as well as to attempt some consideration of the findings in light of the direction of the new coalition government's education policy.

To do this, it addresses the following research question:

What conclusions can be drawn about the work of the participants as TAs, a 'definition' of their role, the historical and possible future development of their role and the education system?

The social, economic and political

Much of education policy and allied wider social policy during the period of New Labour (1997 - 2010) was ideologically informed by particular views of the role of the state, the role of the citizen/individual/family/child and the role of education/educators such as an economisation of being, a technicisation of 'professional' doing, a particular form of rationalisation and re-conceptualisation of policy-imposed knowing as a 'professional' or 'expert'. Panitch (1994)

related the role of the modern capitalist state to the facilitation of the macro-economic organisation of its population and the regulation of conditions of work. This current work has attempted to demonstrate that the rationalisation and technicisation of education for economic purposes was facilitated through the importation of working practices from the private sector which set up new relationships between educators and pupils. Putting these ideas of economisation and rationalisation to the forefront of the work of educators created false divisions in professional and pedagogic agency and set up new agency for all pupils as producers of the measurable outcomes of education. Within this frame, some pupils could no longer be treated 'holistically' by teachers and aspects of teachers' work were separated off willy-nilly to TAs or other members of the school workforce because the NA contained inbuilt ambiguities and tensions between teachers and TAs. The parts of pedagogy given to TAs were ill defined and subject to change, but TAs' labour was cheaper than the labour of teachers. In practice this professional and pedagogic separation was artificial and a source of dilemma for the TAs.

Exploring the ideas of macro-economic organisation a little further offers a possible explanation for the complementary developments of education and social policy under New Labour. On the one hand, features of macro-economic organisation and the regulation of conditions of work found expression in policy in the identification of the lack of particular mental, physical, economic and/or social attributes in certain individuals or groups such as pupils and their families. The strands of this aspect of policy through, for example, ECM and CAF meant that professionals could attempt to work on individuals to become 'well adjusted' and productive ('enterprising') individuals through the remediatary, measured and monitored processes and mechanisms of education and multi-agency working for pupils and families. Features of macro-economic policy could also be discerned in areas of prescribed 'professional' knowledge for teachers and guidance and remits for managers and leaders. Where schools and education workers were concerned the provision of professional and vocational standards, 'performance' monitoring and review, and the

delivery of a prescribed curriculum through packaged curriculum materials supported the technicisation of professional doing and hierarchical structures of management and supervision. There was thus a decoupling of the creation and definition of knowledge from the profession to the policy maker. Additionally, in education, the policy response of the NA was caused by a crisis in teacher supply and retention and a lack of political will to commit funding to train, recruit and retain sufficient numbers of qualified teachers.

The prescribed knowledge for teaching and about teaching and the conferment of professional status upon teachers meant that they were privileged financially and in terms of their objectified 'being' where pedagogy was deemed to be an essentialised attribute of that being (McGregor, 2004b). McGregor also maintained a view that saw pedagogy as an 'ongoing and collective achievement' (2004b:351) and set out with the question of how 'spatial arrangements encourage or constrain particular ways of adults working together?' (2004b:348). The findings of my research indicated that space became imbued with meaning and acquired a 'status' and 'power' based on the practices and relations which operated within it. This was the case of the meaning assigned to and drawn from the 'classroom' where the classroom was not seen as a TA-space but rather as a teacher space, and where the TA's presence was other than that of the teacher and of the children where TAs performed subordinate and mediatory roles. Space, particularly in the secondary sector, militated against collaborative activities between teachers and TAs. When the TAs described their work in spaces without teachers, they identified the spaces as other than classrooms. As well as the spatial, my work has shown that other aspects of the work environment can also be discursively mobilised to draw similarity, difference and distinction. Through the immutable mobiles of text, common purpose between the TAs and teachers was identifiable in the production of the measurable outcomes of the pupils and school. In similar vein, the participants in my research also gave a view that teachers' pedagogic being is supported through imported and politically determined immutable mobiles of policy such as the Standards,

the National Curriculum, the Ofsted framework for inspection, the performance management system. Conversely, the TAs would also use references to textual immutable mobiles to differentiate themselves from teachers. Thus, the discursive work of creating difference was necessary because TAs are not teachers, despite working in close pedagogic relationships with pupils. TAs mobilised their resources to create distance and difference between themselves and teachers and to create proximity and empathy with the pupils. It can thus be seen that some of what it means to be a TA resulted from their involvement in discursive work to make themselves teachers, other than teachers and more than teachers. However, the attribution and enactment of pedagogy as aspects of 'professionalism' were problematic as far as the TAs in my research were concerned.

The questions of de-professionalisation and re-professionalisation are in line with the discourse around the specification of job roles and remits, and the measurability of outcomes, as related to the division of labour in schools in my review of policy and literature. However, the questions remain unanswered in policy and subject to shifts in practice. Indeed the findings of the research showed there was evidence over time of TAs being required to take on increasing numbers of traditional teacher activities including planning and teaching, indicating that the boundaries have been pushed back on what assistants can do in classrooms (ATL *et al.*, 2003:13) but without commensurate increases in remuneration, improvements in conditions of employment, or access to professional training and education. Alongside these developments there was evidence of increasing flexibility in terms of expedient short-term gap filling in staffing and the suspension of employment contracts which appeared to be due to financial pressures on school budgets. Thus policy origins as well as national policy and local practice could be seen as instrumental in causing these subjective dilemmas around status, job security, teaching, other than or more than teaching as far as the TAs were concerned. On balance questions of TA distinctiveness and professionalisation or modernisation of the school workforce are largely redundant distractions

(Gunter, 2008) when the effect of policy and practice has been the creation of a large pool of flexibly employed, and poorly remunerated educators.

Nevertheless, the imposition of externally decided forms of professional knowledge and the removal of opportunities to create and share knowledge had the effect of encouraging the TAs to distinguish themselves from teachers. Part of the TAs' practices and discursive work involved them in defining themselves and operating as teachers, as other than teachers and as more than teachers. In their discursive work the TAs were showing how they 'make a difference' to pupils, leading them into subjective dilemma over the use of the word 'teach' and a stress on their knowledge and understanding of the pupils as individuals and of their educational needs. Their discussions led in two directions of definition and explanation, both of which could be related back to policy. Firstly, they referred typically to such matters as the 'school league tables', 'levels of attainment', 'levels of literacy/numeracy', 'prescribed content', 'tick lists' of what to 'cover' with their pupils. In other words, they aligned the 'results' of their work with the policy-prescribed and monitored 'outcomes' of education with pupils as subjects to be worked on to provide the measurable improvements. They often saw this as a distinctive aspect of their work because most of their pupils were considered to be academically, intellectually, physically, socially or emotionally 'challenged' or 'deficient', as identified through reference, measurement and evaluation against policy definitions of challenge and deficiency. Secondly, and resulting from the identification of pupils' challenges and deficiencies, the TAs identified their 'professional' space in the school in contrast with teachers' space as other than classrooms.

It is pertinent and crucial for the future of educators and pupils in primary and secondary schools for the profession to ask questions about professional knowledge, professional practice and collaboration in the current context of an education system dominated by externally determined definitions of professional knowledge and lack of clarity around the remits, roles, pay and status

of TAs and teachers. Professional knowledge is all the more important in relation to TAs whose own experiences of professional education and training vary so greatly and whose ad hoc and shifting deployment can face them with unfamiliar challenges on a regular basis. In the focus groups the TAs gave evidence that their knowledge and understanding of effective teaching came from their observations of qualified teachers. This was a further instance of ad hoc experience which, coupled with lack of time for reflection and planning with teachers, could result in partial and ill-informed understandings of pedagogical principles (Graves, 2011). Thus, the knowledge-base of the TAs has developed in an ad hoc and uneven way, their conditions of employment are flexibilised, and their rates of pay are not transparent. There was evidence that the rates of pay were also flexibilised in terms of one TA being paid at a higher rate for part of the week for her HLTA status, as well as evidence in the focus groups of TAs being paid only for hours worked limited to 'contact' time with pupils.

It is possible to argue that the economisation of being and production of the enterprising citizen is one outcome facilitated through the TAs' and teachers' operation of an externally imposed project focussed on the activation of the labour of pupils to construct them as future workers for the free market. The activation of pupils' labour in its turn produces the commodified outcomes of the school both to support its marketisation and to prove its development and success and that of the adults who work in it. The participants in my research demonstrated that the stimulation of the agency of pupils to produce the measurable outcomes of education was common ground they shared with teachers. Indeed, this patch of common ground was an unproblematised and doxic aspect of their work. To this extent, the discourses of the TAs reflected trends traceable to discourses underpinning policy that chimed with a common-sense, ideological ordering of the world and the workplace. In this context, my examination of policy and literature showed how, over about a quarter of a century and under successive governments, the reconfiguring of education and other public services along neo-liberal lines had embedded a view of education as

a performative process with measurable deliveries of inputs and outcomes for educators, as well as an economic and commodifying process for pupils. Tracing the strands of policy and its ideological foundations rooted in a particular view of the individual and of the economic can therefore be interpreted as having implications for the knowledge-base and practice of educators, whether TAs, teachers or school managers/leaders, within a democratic society. It takes the debate back to the purposes of education and the place democratically agreed to grant the economic relative to other equally or more important and communally more enriching aspects of shared social life.

In many ways the findings of my research concurred with the findings of the literature, particularly in relation to the piecemeal, fragmented and ad hoc aspects of the education, training, deployment and remuneration of the TAs. Much of the policy-supportive literature and research was concerned with determining distinctions between pedagogically active members of the 'wider school workforce' (i.e. anyone who is not a qualified teacher) and others considered not pedagogically active. The work of Blatchford et al. (2009 *inter alia*) and Hutchings *et al.* (2009a and b), for example, showed how, over time, these attempted distinctions were modified through the addition and removal of roles from their taxonomies and re-categorisations of roles within them. The policy-supportive research and literature also sought the opinions of school managers, teachers and members of the 'wider school workforce' about their work and efficacy. When the perceptions of these workers were compared with the 'outcomes' produced by children and young people as shown in the results of policy-determined assessments and levels of attainment, it raised questions about the beneficial effect of classroom support on those outcomes. The policy-supportive literature and research does not appear to question the differences in pedagogical activity between, for example, TAs and qualified teachers. It also appears to leave the question of unquantifiable, unmeasurable - but at least equally humanly beneficial - educative (in its broad sense) and nurturing aspects of pedagogy untouched (Petrie,

2005). The attempts made by some of the writers of the literature to define the boundaries and demarcations of the roles and remits of teachers and TAs could be wasted effort since the reality in classrooms and schools where the TAs in my research worked demonstrated transgressions of boundaries for reasons ranging from the individual TA's intrinsic motivation to take on more challenging work through to school managers' decisions to put TAs in charge of qualified teachers (REF from PDAP).

The TAs referred to the standards agenda, and the delivery model of education (Howes, 2003), and they encompassed inclusion and notions of remediation from ECM and CAF. They deferred in general to teachers but simultaneously they saw themselves as more than teachers. Their deference came where the leading of teaching and learning in classrooms was concerned. However but they did not defer to teachers where their wider knowledge of individual children was concerned. They thereby constructed a place for themselves to remediate individual children for the purposes of bringing them into the mainstream of the teacher's classroom to perform for the good of the school. The awareness and application of professional and vocational standards did not feature in the day-to-day work of the TAs but it was evident in their more reflective activities such as the PDAPs and assignments. These findings from my research suggest that a future enquiry into the qualitative differences in contributions to teaching and learning made by TAs with foundation or first degree-level qualifications may be fruitful.

Despite the rationalising intentions of policy and the on-the-ground work in schools vis-à-vis the rationalised work of teachers, the findings of my research indicated that the rationalising process of the work of TAs has not been particularly effective. I found, for example, that the professional and vocational standards for TAs and HLTAs (TDA, 2007a and b) did not generally feature as recursive aspects of their day-to-day work in schools. The greatest awareness of the standards was to be found among those TAs who were students on Foundation Degrees, and these

participants made reference to them to inform their work as undergraduate students rather than as frameworks for work in their schools. Nor was a system of regular 'performance management' evident from any of the TAs in their schools.

To return then to 'policy', and my research questions about its promotion of relations of power, and its shaping of the subjectivity and agency of the research participants. Through the promotion of 'junior' and 'senior' roles for TAs and teachers in the NA there is a covert reinforcement and approbation of a relation of dominant power between the two parties, and the participants in my research would often work within the parameters of a relationship of deference to take instructions from teachers or to hand back control of planning to teachers. On the other hand the TAs often characterised their relationships with pupils as more personalised, thus privileging their knowledge over that of the teachers. In relation to these two points it was my intention at an earlier point in this work to demonstrate that the complementary relationships between teachers and between pupils and TAs and pupils were the ones that demonstrated relations of power in the harnessing of pupils' agency to perform i.e. to alter the state of affairs (Latour, 2005:70) pertaining to the relationship between the measurable outcomes of children's labour and the position of the school in the 'league tables'.

Regarded in this light, ascribing the existence of relations of power is not a simple question of cause and effect due to one policy such as the NA. Rather I would maintain that it is the coming together (the networking by agents) of several policies in and across particular places at particular times that supports the operation of relations of power. The multiplicity of places, policies and people provides agents with resources on which to draw to create their discourses and occasion action in relation to each other. The resources also provide the opportunities for the ideologisation of people, places, objects, relations and practices. Thus, for example, the imposition of an externally decided curriculum and its allied mechanisms of evaluation and

control present an opportunity for giving commonality to the work of TAs and teachers.

Alongside this, other imported policies such as 'inclusion', SEN, ECM and CAF, provide TAs with opportunities to underpin their work ideologically and to differentiate it from the work of teachers. The locational deference shown to teachers where the 'status' of the classroom and teacher is concerned provides a further resource that the TAs can employ to demarcate their own position and role. Overriding all these ideologisations of position, there is the unquestioned, taken-for-granted acceptance of externally imposed policies, the roots of which can be traced back to ideologisations of the state, the economy and the place of the individual.

It was not within the scope of this research to examine the discourses of teachers and their comparisons and contrasts of their work with that of TAs or of their perceptions of institutional space and place. However, the findings of my project suggest that further work could be fruitfully undertaken in these areas. Equally fruitful might be a complementary study of the development and dissemination of the kinds of professional knowledge which are shared and put into operation between the TAs and teachers and the extent to which 'policy' penetrates and conditions their professional knowing.

In conclusion, whatever the outcomes and consequences of the New Labour public sector reforms, and however misguided their economic and ideological foundations may have been, one cannot doubt New Labour's genuine intentions to attempt to ameliorate the social conditions of large numbers of children and families. Nor can one doubt the inherent contradictions and tensions in the NA, reinforced in practice through the 'standards' and 'inclusion' agendas. At the time of writing it remains to be seen what the change of government from May 2010 means for the future of TAs, teachers and other members of the wider school workforce, particularly under a regime committed to privileging private capital over public good. Changes in rhetoric are

emerging from the coalition government which appear to downplay or side-line TAs without removing them from schools. Thus, in the White Paper of 2010, one reads:

In the best schools, well-deployed teaching assistants support teachers in achieving excellent results with pupils.

(DfE, 2010b:25)

This has been translated in the latest version of the Teachers' Standards, effective from September 2012, to read that teachers must 'deploy support staff effectively' (DfE, 2012:8) and the even more nebulous, proposed wording of the 'Master Teacher' standard which reads that Master Teachers will 'work to significant effect with other adults in ensuring high quality education for the pupils they serve' (Independent Review Body of Teachers' Standards, 2011:11).

The theoretical and sociological

In considering theoretical and methodological approaches to my thesis I initially attempted to separate binaries (Derrida, 1978) such as macro- and micro-level social theories and examinations of the interplay between structure and agency. I was also tempted to pursue similar approaches to ideology and power, seeing each operating at macro and micro levels in relation to social context. On reflection and through iterative engagement with the theorists and the findings from my research, I came to the conclusion that these routes were leading me into the 'trap' of trying to foreground the discovery of essential differences between TAs and teachers, thus perpetuating ideological discourses resulting from policy and from those parts of the literature which supported the division. This 'trap' would have consequently perpetuated a continuation of a false division between the pedagogy of teachers and TAs. If I had continued with the false division I would have further promoted an undemocratic view of what is occurring in schools and left space for the distancing of the groups. My encounter with the work of McGregor (2004a and b) and Latour (2005) gave me a way of overcoming essentialised and essentialising hierarchies and of examining the 'networked' agency of the TAs. In particular, Latour (2005) enabled me to envisage

the social as 'flat' and not to privilege the macro over the micro or *vice versa*. Simultaneously, Latour's ANT enables the analyst / researcher to seek the connections between agents in interlocking networks through the idea of 'immutable mobiles'.

Through the application of ANT and ideas on meaning making and ideology, and the analytical tool of CDA, I have moved from a position of seeing TAs as a 'problem' to be solved to one of seeing them as a feature of a particular construction of an education 'system' which results, albeit often haphazardly and serendipitously, from particular political and economic views of the role of the state and the individual.

The naturalisation of relations of power and (self-)positioning of the subject is a result of subjective discursive engagement, experience and reflection over time and space. In other words, it results from the accrued, explicit or implicit/tacit knowledge which the subject has about self-conduct in particular situations and in relation to her/his perceptions of particular networks. Thus one sees that certain types of agency in networks come to be naturalised, stabilised, and unquestioned. Here I am developing the idea of the subject as agent operating subjectively within and reflecting discursively upon networks as well as having an effect on them through dialogue and action. My argument also implies that the subject comes to 'understand' the networks through the resources they provide, through discourse and then works within their parameters.

However, a subject's participations in the external social world are not all carried out in terms of equality of contribution and of outcome. The influence of the contribution and impact of outcome depend on the actual and perceived relationship between the subjects and networks within which they are operating; all of which also vary dependent on context. The relative relations of power between subjects are what determine efficacy of contribution and outcome. So, for example, a subject may find that s/he is relatively powerful in one social context (say, a TA

within the educational support department of a school) but powerless, or even absent, in another (the same TA within the management hierarchy of the school).

The line of argument I am adopting here has implications for 'participations' (Bruner, 1990:107). Where a subject is not present, or is even deliberately excluded by others, then the absent subject can obviously not have a direct influence on the social interaction of the group from which s/he is absent. However, the actions of this group of 'others' may have a direct influence on the absentee and on the networks of which s/he is part. Decisions on inclusion and exclusion can be seen as one example of the exercise of power in social relations; equally inclusion can have duplicitous or dissembling intentions on the part of the powerful others, or one's presence can be negated by the nature or lack of contribution one makes to the group. The exercise of power to include or exclude therefore alters the social relations within the networks.

This discussion of the power of others to determine the location of contextually less powerful subjects becomes a common-sense fact of social and material reality through time and space. It thereby obfuscates relations of domination and power through the routinized, habitual exercise of agency by knowledgeable actors in habitual, 'secure' locations. To amplify this point, it is the discursive mobilisation of apparently 'objective' structure and the associated discursive mobilisation of the 'objective' position of the subject as agent within those 'objective' structures which enables the continuation of power relations of domination and subjection. Because the discursive mobilisations are constant and naturalised within their network contexts across time and space they are also constant reassertions and re-workings of dominant power relations. The words of the participants showed how the relations of power over children in the production of the measurable outcomes of education were a common enterprise between TAs and teachers. There were also variations in the presence / absence of TAs in the professional *fora* of the schools over time in the West Midlands Focus Group and the North West High School Focus Group.

In conclusion, I would argue that one strength of my approach lies in its attempts to complement the resource provided by ANT in analysing the social and material environment within which the TAs found themselves with analytical tools to explore how the research participants constructed and explained their experiences. Against this background, ideas on ideology, doxa and dilemma provided a means by which to explain how the participants both rationalised and problematised those experiences and brought meaning for me to Fairclough's (2001) statement that all MR are ideological. Equally I found ANT instrumental in enabling me to overcome the macro- / micro-dilemma in theorising the location of the research participants. This endeavour was central in preventing me from imposing a theory of reified social structures and from privileging the 'societal' level over the 'individual' level, and indeed in preventing the recourse to ideas of 'levels' in any form. Again, Latour's advice to allow the participants to determine the scale or level of resources they drew on proved useful in identifying the figurations (Latour, 2005) of agency the participants deployed.

I believe that another strength of my work is in the light it sheds on the experiences of a small but arguably 'typical' number of TAs working in primary and secondary schools. These are voices that get lost in larger scale studies; and they are important voices for the very reason that they give witness to the first-hand experience of working in poorly paid, flexible roles in schools today. Their voices are also more generally important to democratic aspirations because they show how the values and interests of more powerful and remote 'others' can be unquestioningly assimilated into the discourses of everyday life.

Reflections, reflexivity, and the analyst/researcher as an ethical subject

This project has not been a search for answers. Rather it has been a search for a sense of aspects of a social world – a world that, on the face of it, seems to be 'out there' and tangible like the

trees and houses across the street. But the social world is in reality, and perhaps paradoxically, in me, in you and between us: it is in our shared understandings of it, in the patterns we impose upon it and in the positions we (may choose or be forced to) adopt in relation to it and to each other. The social world becomes real at the points in time and place when individuals discursively mobilise their own MR in their understandings of its structures and relations and then experience the effects of the discursive mobilisation through their practices.

In line with this underlying subjective and constructivist stance I have not made any generalisable 'truth' claims for my findings. But I would claim that my findings captured the reflections and opinions of a number of TAs on particular themes, at particular moments in time. My reading of the words of the TAs thus represented only one possible interpretation among many because I am also of the view that the whole of this work is constituted by and constitutive of wider discourses, including the formation of my own subjective engagement with and interpretation of aspects of the external social world as evidenced in the production of this text itself.

The routine and unselfconscious resort to one's MR and the consequent obfuscation of ideology and relations of power can apply equally to the researcher as well as to the participant.

Fairclough (2001:138-139) is careful to contrast the position of the analyst/researcher with that of the participant through his use of the word 'self-consciousness' as a desired and ethical attribute of the analyst/researcher. In other words, as an analyst/researcher, one must acknowledge that one brings one's own MR to the research and analysis and that one is subject to cultural, political and historical discourses as well as to relations of power where discourses and power relations can be 'hidden' as naturalised and ideological common sense.

In terms of my own MR, for example, I have long been captivated by the metanarratives of rationalist theorisations of society (Marx, Weber, Giddens *inter alia*). I am thus aware that this

current work may have shown a desire to identify pattern and order, or to develop taxonomies of the social. However, it has been my intention that any such identification should have occurred as a result of the findings of the research, and not from any *a priori* assumptions at the stage of theorisation, nor from a *deus ex machina* entering the findings and conclusions of this work.

On the one hand, the consideration of 'grand' theories was useful and educative as a tool for acquainting myself with ways of thinking about society. For example, during the earlier phases of my research I engaged with Giddens' (1986) theory of structuration to explore the possibility of applying his ideas on the relationships between agency and structure to my project. Likewise I considered Weberian (1992) perspectives, for example Du Gay (2000). Foucault's thoughts on knowledge and power (1980a; 1988a), technologies of the self (1988b), governmentality and political technologies (1977) have had an obvious effect on this work in the policy and literature review as well as in the understanding of the privileging of certain types of knowledge. On the other hand, the wholesale application of any particular grand theory would have proved unsuited to the purposes of this project since my concern has been with individuals within particular but limited locations within a society. My search for and choice of theoretical perspectives resulted from a need to be able to make sense of my participants' words through letting them speak and showing how their words might illuminate their own and wider social situations and not to impose a pre-determined sociological ideologisation on their words.

In this work, therefore, I attempted to maintain a 'self-conscious' approach, developing self- and social awareness through engaging with theories which, for example, attempt to uncover and explain the embedded imbrications of power relations and ideology. Fairclough (2001:118) relates this as a process of 'demystification' because:

. . . neither the dependence of discourse on background assumptions, nor the ideological properties of these assumptions which link them to social struggles and relations of power, are generally obvious to discourse participants.

Thus, as a researcher, I sought 'to bridge the gap between analyst and participant through the widespread development of rational understanding of, and theories of, society' (Fairclough, 2001:139).

One can equally relate the development of a self-conscious approach to stages or shifts in the nature of my on-going collecting and iterative consideration of texts for inclusion in this work. Indeed I would go so far as to say that Chapter 4 '*Methods*' was pivotal in the process and illustrated the self-developmental, reflexive nature of this kind of study and research to enable me to use my 'sociological imagination' (Mills, 1959). Having gone from initially capturing serendipitous notes and quasi-anecdotal evidence for the introductory chapter, through a deliberate and deliberative consideration of a body of literature and policy in Chapter 2, to an engagement with social theories in Chapter 3, one can trace an increasing level of self-consciousness which was intended to enable me at the very least to begin 'to bridge the gap' (Fairclough, 2001:139) between researcher and participant. I moved from a position of finding the anecdotal and serendipitous intellectually stimulating and curious to one of establishing a position from which to ask questions about the constitution of aspects of the 'world' of education and of the people who inhabit it through an interrogation of texts that made links between the 'outcomes' and 'products' of education and their relationships to wider social phenomena such as policy and relations and practices in schools.

The iterative processes of research, analysis and thesis composition, undertaken from a constructivist perspective and involving the words of others, increased my awareness of the ethical aspects of my undertaking. Reflecting on the earlier chapters of this thesis, I can identify

aspects of my work that could fall under the heading of an ethical approach. I find support for this interpretation in Chase (in Denzin and Lincoln 2008:77) in my overt sharing of aspects of my subject position, social location, personal experience and what led me to undertake this project. Equally, my attempt to give 'voice' to my participants was an ethically defensible and democratic position – some would argue that it is potentially emancipatory.

My closing remarks concern the effect of undertaking this research on my professional practice as a tutor and beginning researcher in HE. My foregrounding of the voices of the TAs enabled an account of their own understandings and perceptions in relation to their social and material working environments. Using these accounts as a resource, I employed several research tools, including my approach to the review of policy and literature, that enabled me to question current assumptions about the role and work of TAs, and to explore aspects of TA role ambiguity, as well as to suggest that TAs can be considered a manifestation of flexibilised workers within the context of an economically neo-liberalised public sector. For my purposes, the strengths of ANT (Latour, 1997; 2005) were, firstly, that it enabled me to move away from privileging the macro over the micro, or vice versa, and secondly, its theorisation of power as altering a state of affairs. My discussions around the TAs' ideologisations proposed that the TAs aligned their agency according to social context and purpose and that the ideologisations could be either doxic, common-sense and 'easy', or indications of struggle, conflict and dilemma: either of which could be indicative of dominant relations of power.

Whilst this research project focused on TAs as a theme, the approach can be used more generally in both teaching and research to problematize social relations and practices, particularly where privileged social groups make claims for their views and use these claims to justify making claims upon the lives of others. In my future teaching practice I will, for example, seek to develop the reflective, reflexive and critical abilities of my students through encouraging them to examine

their own understandings, perceptions and experiences in relation to the claims made by others upon them and on their behalf: in other words, to speak with a better informed and more critical voice. From the perspective of my future research, my engagement with both the theoretical and empirical aspects of research has reinforced my view of the centrality of language in the formation and understanding of the social world. The use - production and comprehension - of language is pervasive, taken for granted, and, for the majority of humanity, inescapable. Yet an examination of the content of language across a range of thematically related sources can indicate how individuals and groups are positioned in relation to and by other individuals and groups, as well as how these positionings are justified, accepted, accommodated or questioned.

Thus, my work comes full circle and returns to ideas about text and language explored in the introductory chapter; to the interweaving of texts that formed the whole basis for this current work. My textual impositions, interpretations and explanations of the words of the participants and of the policy-makers, writers and theorists have been (re)presented as 'real', i.e. as a socially relevant and affective/effective object. However, I need to recognise a balance which had to be struck and an imposition which had to be acknowledged. The balance to be struck was between 'their' words – between participants', policy makers' and writers'/theorists' words - and mine, and in a way that made them meaningful. The imposition was my initial determination of the questions and themes for the interviews and focus groups during the early stages of my project. Perhaps I was at that time (and maybe I still am) 'a prisoner of modernity' captured by its metanarratives and ideologies (after Scheurich and McKenzie in Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:338) and importing these discourses, albeit unwittingly, into my encounters and participations.

This prisoner of modernity therefore closes by asking: To what extent can one exist outside one's time and place?

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Annexes

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Annex 1: Michael Barber

Michael Barber was a central figure in determining the New Labour policy trajectory. He can be regarded as both a policy theorist through, for example, his book *The Learning Game* (1996) and a policy actor. In the light of Barber's influence on policy it is here worth considering what he regards as the causes and the achievements of the ERA and its aftermath that he likens to a 'cultural revolution' (1996: 44 - 49) as these are themes that shape his own views and impact on New Labour's policy direction. He attributes the causes to:

- Growing social diversity
- Growing dissatisfaction with the 'output of the education service'
- Growing dissatisfaction with economic performance
- A need/desire to control public spending
- Public accountability of the public sector
- Slow decision making in the public sector.

He lists the achievements as of the Conservatives' ERA as:

- Funding was delegated to schools
- National standards were established
- Public accountability had been achieved
- 'Producer stranglehold' on policy was loosened.

(Barber, 1996: 68)

Barber's book *The Learning Game* (1996) foreshadowed many policy aspects and initiatives undertaken by New Labour governments from 1997 – 2010. In places his book reads almost like a handbook of education reform for New Labour. At the very least these are examples of the state exercising its power to shape the structures of the system and the operation of agency within it. Among Barber's proposals that were later adopted or adapted by New Labour governments we can cite the following:

- A General Teaching Council or Learning Council (1996: 216 - 218)
- The Learning Society or Lifelong Learning (LLL) (1996: 217, 226, 242, 282 -3 inter alia)
- Multi-agency and partnership working (1996: 219) and schools as community learning centres (1996: 258) including the prospect of 'the twenty-four learning hours in the day, for the pupils, for adults and for community organisations' i.e. Lifelong Learning (LLL) (1996: 266)

- IT and its importance (1996: 219, 258): IT as the enabler of change (1996:252): IT as a way of assessing and measuring pupils and also the effectiveness of schools and teachers (1996: 278 – 279)
- Ensuring and requiring an understanding and commitment to learning by teachers (as seen later in the primary and secondary strategies, KS3 strategy etc) (1996: 219, 260)
- Nursery provision (i.e. Sure Start and Early Years Professional Status), literacy at primary level, provision of learning resources in disadvantaged homes identified as areas of direct need (1996: 298)
- Assessment targets to be pursued with a 'rigour . . . central to the approach' (1996: 277) i.e. national key stage testing and targeting
- Providing teachers with a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) strand 'to prepare a profession for the learning society' (1996: 230): CPD funding to target the disadvantaged areas (cf. Masters in Teaching and Learning for NQTs and HODs in national challenge schools) (1996: 235)
- Monitoring and appraisal (an 'MOT for teachers') i.e. Performance Management (1996: 221) and Performance Related Pay (PRP) i.e. the Threshold (1996: 227)
- Advanced Skills Teachers (1996: 228)
- The wider school workforce remodelling and 'paraprofessionals' (1996: 232): TAs and their management by teachers together with proposals for courses to train them and offer the option for them to become teachers (1996: 231)
- The wider school workforce and remodelling: use of administrators and paraprofessionals to free up teachers to concentrate on the individual learning process (1996: 263 – 264)

To justify his proposed changes to the education system Barber drew on global and national events and moral 'crises'. He situated his proposals in what he saw as the crisis facing education by moving from global issues such as war and the environment, moving through to national ones of moral decline (through homing in on the particular and atypical such as children murdering children) and then took the argument back to international comparisons of various countries' pupils' achievement in maths (1996: 15 – 22) and subsequently linked the then current quantifiable failure in maths to lack of jobs in the future (1996: 25). He overtly saw education reform as necessary to address the issues of national youth crime, drugs, sex, violence and problems with the 'youth of today' in general (1996: 28). Barber also favoured his proposals as a way of democratic societies catching up with global developments such as environmental issues, population growth, refugees, asylum seekers, and unemployment in the global 'South' (1996: 237). Somewhat naively from our own perspective that now benefits from hindsight to the economic crisis of 2008, he felt his proposals could mitigate the effects of global capitalism:

If the global marketplace is to operate within a framework of morality based on notions of democratic society and focused on solving the huge range of global challenges ahead, then the time left for schools and their leaders to catch up is

limited. We need to develop and refine our own concept – as educators worldwide of the global paradox . . .

(1996: 238)

To my mind, there are, however, question marks over morality and the interpretation of 'global challenges' where capitalism is concerned. For example, capitalism does create 'global challenges' to the political and social, the responses to which can be made by governments exercising a questionable and political morality that further protects the interests of the sources of the 'global challenge' (as seen in the recent economic crisis of 2008 and government responses to it). Equally there are examples of the social and political posing 'global challenges' to capitalist economic interests interpreted as 'terrorist threats' from 'fundamentalists' or seen in democratic socialism in Allende's Chile, Scandinavia or Gorbachev's vision for post-communist Russia (Klein, 2007: 480).

Albeit, the foregrounding of the economic purposes of education as vital to the competitive global success of a nation's (future) workers was one of the hallmarks of New Labour policy, as was the interpretation of the global economy as a 'knowledge economy':

Learning is the key to prosperity . . .

(DfEE, 1998a: 1)

. . . education is our best economic policy . . . (in) this new economy based on knowledge . . .

(Blair, 2005)

Reading Panitch (1994) we might see a more nuanced interpretation as applicable here in that New Labour, perhaps with good social intentions, was looking for ways to make education responsive to the new social and economic conditions but the actual effect was a continuation of the neoliberal agenda of providing the infrastructures to support globalised capital.

However, Barber's (1996) slant on the economic came at a time when the idea of the 'knowledge economy' had perhaps not yet become so well articulated generally and was subsumed to a large extent in his idea of the 'learning society'. It is possible that we are also seeing here the discursively convenient conflation of two separate but ill-defined notions that have a common-sense laudability about them but actually enable the obfuscation and confusion of their origins and intent. The notion of a 'learning society' is an idea that can be traced back through the range of western democratic political thought of Right, Left and Centre as something that serves both individual and public goods. The 'knowledge economy', on the other hand, is ideologically and practically linked to the neoliberal globalisation of capitalism where knowledge and its production are seen as economic commodities to be traded, giving economic advantage to the producers and possessors of knowledge and working from the principle that valuable knowledge is defined as the knowledge that serves the interests of capital (See, for example, CBI (2005) *The Business of Education Improvement*, page 29). And there are aspects of this nascent theme in Barber's

(1996) work when, for example, he discusses Lifelong Learning (LLL) (1996: 242 et seq.) and Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) (1996: 283 - 284):

People would not only be in a position to think about constantly, and realise from time to time, their learning needs; they would also have some means of funding further learning – if necessary – during the periods of unemployment which many people, however highly skilled, will find they have to go through.

(1996: 284)

The implications of his discussion appear to be that LLL will provide a source of well-trained/educated labour to fill whatever jobs are available and use their times of economic inactivity to 'learn'. To illustrate the persistent and seminal nature of Barber's ideas, it is interesting to note that in the summer of 2009 the New Labour government under Prime Minister Gordon Brown was guaranteeing training to long-term unemployed young people in the 16 – 24 age range as a way of maximising their potential for employment (BBC, 2009a and b). A similar persistence of his ideas (1996: 296) in New Labour education policy is evidenced in his argument for a Department of Lifelong Learning that could be seen as foreshadowing New Labour's creation of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DfIUS) in 2007.

Annex 2: The growth in TA numbers

Estimates of the number or FTE staff employed as TA equivalent and change from Wave 2 to Wave 3 (DISS Project). England and Wales combined. (Source: Blatchford et al., 2009b:22)

Support Staff Category	Post Title	Number FTE - Wave 1	Number FTE - Wave 2	Number FTE - Wave 3	% Change Wave 1 to 3
TA Equivalent	Classroom Assistant	57,790	49,490	54,644	-5%
	Higher Level TA	2,208	7,413	12,064	+446%
	Learning Support Assistant	43,958	41,376	44,206	+1%
	(for SEN pupils)	16,637	11,531	11,134	-33%
	Nursery Nurse	1,176	710	1,508	+28%
	Therapist	33,948	63,441	77,614	+129%
	Teaching Assistant	155,717	173,961	201,170	+29%
	All posts combined (95% Confidence Interval)	(150544, 160889)	(168237, 179686)	(194773, 207566)	

Annex 3: Extracts from the National Agreement (ATL et al., 2003)

Part A

‘Proscribed’ tasks for teachers in the National Agreement

Mainly administrative and clerical tasks

22. Teachers should not routinely do administrative and clerical tasks¹. The School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions Document will be changed to reflect the provisions below.

23. Teachers should have support so that they can focus on teaching and learning and expect administrative and clerical processing to be done by support staff. Consequently, teachers should not routinely be required to undertake administrative and clerical tasks, including:

- ☐ Collecting money;
- ☐ Chasing absences – teachers will need to inform the relevant member of staff when students are absent from their class or from school;
- ☐ Bulk photocopying;
- ☐ Copy typing;
- ☐ Producing standard letters – teachers may be required to contribute as appropriate in formulating the content of standard letters;
- ☐ Producing class lists – teachers may be required to be involved as appropriate in allocating students to a particular class;
- ☐ Record keeping and filing – teachers may be required to contribute to the content of records;
- ☐ Classroom display – teachers will make professional decisions in determining what material is displayed in and around their classroom;
- ☐ Analysing attendance figures – it is for teachers to make use of the outcome of analysis;
- ☐ Processing exam results – teachers will need to use the analysis of exam results;
- ☐ Collating pupil reports;
- ☐ Administering work experience – teachers may be required to support pupils on work experience (including through advice and visits);
- ☐ Administering examinations – teachers have a professional responsibility for identifying appropriate examinations for their pupils;
- ☐ Invigilating examinations – see distinct provisions below;
- ☐ Administering teacher cover;
- ☐ ICT trouble shooting and minor repairs;
- ☐ Commissioning new ICT equipment;
- ☐ Ordering supplies and equipment – teachers may be involved in identifying needs;
- ☐ Stocktaking;
- ☐ Cataloguing, preparing, issuing and maintaining equipment and materials;
- ☐ Minuting meetings – teachers may be required to communicate action points from meetings;
- ☐ Co-ordinating and submitting bids – teachers may be required to make a professional input into the content of bids;
- ☐ Seeking and giving personnel advice;
- ☐ Managing pupil data – teachers will need to make use of the analysis of pupil data;
- ☐ Inputting pupil data – teachers will need to make the initial entry of pupil data into school management systems.

24. The changes above will be promulgated in draft early in 2003, to take effect in every school from September 2003 at the latest, with schools working towards the changes as far as possible prior to that.

25. In addition, the following provisions will be introduced on exam invigilation:

- a) Teachers should not routinely be required to invigilate external examinations;

b) Teachers should usually continue to conduct practical and oral examinations;

c) Teachers may be required to supervise internal examinations and tests, where these take place during their normal timetabled teaching time.

26. The invigilation changes will be promulgated in draft early in 2003, to take effect in every school from September 2005 at the latest, with schools working towards the changes as far as possible prior to that. During the period to September 2005, schools should maximise the use of support staff as external examination invigilators.

(ATL et al., 2003:5-6)

Part B

Support staff reform

60. Schools will not be able to deliver in practice the contractual changes for teachers covered by this Agreement unless there are appropriate extensions in both the numbers and roles of support staff in the classroom. This will include the development of a new stream of high level teaching assistants. The remuneration of support staff, including high level teaching assistants, will need to reflect their level of training, skills and responsibilities. Negotiations are taking place in the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services to develop a national framework covering support staff employed in schools on NJC conditions (i.e. the Green Book). The Signatories recognise that a successful outcome to these negotiations will be critical to the delivery of this Agreement.

61. Support staff working alongside teachers have *already* contributed to significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, including as part of the literacy and numeracy strategies, in early years and in SEN. Over the coming years, we shall see new developments, pushing back the boundaries of what assistants can do in classrooms. In taking this forward, we recognise that:

- ☐ Qualified teachers make the leading contribution to teaching and learning, reflecting their training and expertise. Each class/group for timetabled core and foundation subjects must be assigned a qualified teacher to teach them (subject to the existing unqualified teacher provisions). Accountability for the overall learning outcomes of a particular pupil must rest with that pupil's qualified classroom/subject teacher;

- ☐ Consequently, teachers and high level teaching assistants are not interchangeable and this principle will be reflected in new regulations to be introduced under section 133 of the Education Act 2002. The fact that high level teaching assistants will be working with whole classes for some of the time does not make them substitutes for when pupils need a qualified teacher, bringing the extra range, experience and complexity of understanding reflected in their higher qualifications;

- ☐ Teaching assistants who interact with pupils in relation to teaching and learning, must do so within a regulated system of supervision and leadership operated by the pupils' classroom/subject teacher; they may specialise in working across a particular subject area;

- ☐ It follows that the role of high level teaching assistants is to support qualified teachers over teaching and learning, and their duties in this regard must always be in line with their relevant training and expertise. This is especially important where high level teaching assistants are working with a class when the assigned teacher is not present;

- ☐ A professional standards framework and training for high level teaching assistants will be developed by the Teacher Training Agency and linked to relevant QTS modules. The standards of prior experience, experience on the job, and any training, should bring the high level teaching assistant to roughly the equivalent of NVQ level 4. It will provide a sound basis from which many high level teaching assistants could progress, in time, to become qualified teachers;

- ☐ Pay and career structures should be developed that reflect the roles and

responsibilities of support staff, including the option for high level teaching assistants to go on and train to become a qualified teacher;

□ The professional judgement of teachers about the contribution of any high level teaching assistant must be informed by an appropriate national standards framework for such assistants, and by national guidance to schools concerning the operation of the school system of supervision;

□ Teachers will not usually be required to undertake formal aspects of the line management of support staff, including personnel / career advice and performance management;

□ Subject to the points above, high level teaching assistants can make a substantial contribution to the teaching and learning process in schools and to raising standards of achievement by pupils.

Further roles

62. Support staff reform will not be confined to high level teaching assistants. Earlier paragraphs discussed the development of the cover supervisor role. Additional school support staff will also be recruited to act as “personal assistants” to teachers. They will provide administrative support to subject and year group areas, where they can provide direct, targeted support for individual teachers. They will develop expertise relevant to the teachers they support.

63. Additional technical support staff will also be recruited, including in ICT. And many schools will develop further the use of support staff in roles involving the guidance and supervision of pupils. Clearly, it will be necessary for such staff to be skilled and trained in behaviour management and to be able to command the respect of pupils.

64. Schools will also need to consider whether the management of many of the administrative and clerical tasks carried out by support staff should be transferred from qualified teachers to appropriately trained non-QTS managers.

65. There may be cases where teachers have been given management allowances for carrying out some of the tasks listed above. These allowances may continue if the teacher continues to manage the task. However, headteachers may wish to agree with those teachers alternative responsibilities that would more directly support teaching and learning.

(ATL et al., 2003:11-13)

Annex 4: Salaries of TA equivalent support staff

(Source: Blatchford *et al.*, 2009b:114)

Wages of support staff (£ per hour) for individual post titles. Wave 3

Post Title	Mean Wage (Standard Deviation)	<£7.50 / hour	£7.50-£10.00 / hour	£10.01-£15.00 / hour	>£15.00 per hour
TA Equivalent					
Classroom Assistant	£8.15 (£2.28)	10 (42%)	10 (42%)	4 (17%)	0 (0%)
Higher Level TA	£11.90 (£1.84)	0 (0%)	12 (16%)	60 (81%)	2 (3%)
LSA (for SEN pupils)	£9.41 (£2.13)	18 (17%)	57 (54%)	28 (26%)	3 (3%)
Nursery Nurse	£12.33 (£2.45)	3 (6%)	7 (15%)	32 (60%)	5 (9%)
Teaching Assistant	£9.70 (£2.27)	42 (13%)	165 (53%)	101 (32%)	6 (2%)
Therapist	£18.51 (£5.95)	0 (0%)	1 (6%)	5 (31%)	10 (63%)

Annex 4: Teaching salary scales as from Sept 2010

01/11/2011

Teaching salary scales - TDA

Training and Development Agency for Schools

Teaching salary scales

This page outlines the basic salary scales for all teachers from September 2010:

	England and Wales (excluding London and fringes)	Inner London	Outer London	London fringes
Leadership group				
Max (headteachers)	£105,097	£112,181	£108,070	£106,137
Min (headteachers)	£42,379	£49,466	£45,351	£43,416
Min	£37,461	£44,540	£40,433	£38,493
Advanced skills teachers				
Max	£56,950	£64,036	£59,925	£57,985
Min	£37,461	£44,540	£40,433	£38,493
Post-threshold pay scale				
Max	£36,756	£45,000	£40,433	£37,795
Min	£34,181	£41,497	£37,599	£35,218
Main pay scale				
Max	£31,552	£36,387	£35,116	£32,588
Min	£21,588	£27,000	£25,117	£22,626
Unqualified teachers				
Max	£25,016	£29,088	£27,992	£26,052
Min	£15,817	£19,893	£18,789	£16,856

View definitions of the London fringe, outer London, and inner London

Teaching and learning responsibility (TLR) payment

An additional payment to a teacher for taking on sustained additional responsibilities for which the teacher is accountable.

TLR 1 max	£12,393
TLR 1 min	£7,323
TLR 2 max	£6,197
TLR 2 min	£2,535

Special educational needs allowance

Annex 5: Potter and Wetherell (1987:160-176)

'Ten stages in the analysis of discourse'

- 1 Research questions related to construction and function
- 2 Sample selection
- 3 Collection of records and documents
- 4 Interviews
- 5 Transcription
- Intermission – sit back and relax
- 6 Coding
- 7 Analysis
- 8 Validation
- 9 The report
- 10 Application

Annex 6: Fairclough (2001:92 - 93)

'Ten questions' to ask to arrive at a description of the discourse

A. Vocabulary

1 What *experiential* values do words have?

What classification schemes are drawn upon?

Are there words which are ideologically contested?

Is there *rewording* or *overwording*?

What ideologically significant meaning relations (*synonymy*, *hyponymy*, *antonymy*) are there between words?

2 What *relational* values do words have?

Are there euphemistic expressions?

Are there markedly formal or informal words?

3 What *expressive* values do words have?

4 What metaphors are used?

B. Grammar

5 What *experiential* values do grammatical features have?

What types of process and participant predominate?

Is agency unclear?

Are processes what they seem?

Are *nominalizations* used?

Are sentences active or passive?

Are sentences positive or negative?

6 What *relational* values do grammatical features have?

What *modes* (*declarative*, *grammatical question*, *imperative*) are used?

Are there important features of *relational modality*?

Are the pronouns *we* and *you* used, and if so, how?

7 What *expressive* values do grammatical features have?

Are there important features of *expressive modality*?

8 How are (simple) sentences linked together?

What logical connectors are used?

Are complex sentences characterised by *coordination* or *subordination*?

What means are used for referring inside and outside the text?

C. Textual structures

9 What interactional conventions are used?

Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?

10 What larger-scale structures does the text have?

Annex 7: Information and proformas given to participants about the research

Information Sheet

Study Title: Negotiating positions: a discourse-based exploration of the work of Teaching Assistants in English schools

Invitation

You are being invited to consider taking part in a research study '**Negotiating positions: a discourse-based exploration of the work of Teaching Assistants in English schools**'. This project is being undertaken by Paul Bartle.

Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish. Ask me, Paul Bartle, if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because of your current working role in an educational setting.

Do I have to take part?

You are free to decide if you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign two consent forms, one is for you to keep and the other is for our records. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without giving reason.

What will happen if I take part?

Participation is in the form either of informal interviews or focus groups at times convenient to you. It is anticipated that there will be three interviews during the course of the project or one focus group.

What do I have to do?

If you are interested in participating in this study, please return the response slip which is attached to the invitation letter to Paul Bartle in the stamped-addressed envelope. Paul will telephone you to arrange a convenient time and place for a first meeting. If I don't hear

from you within the next two weeks, you will be sent a reminder letter. If I don't hear from you after this I'll understand that you do not wish to take part.

What are the benefits of taking part?

There are no expected benefits to you personally; however, you will be aware that the deployment of increasing numbers of teaching assistants and support staff in educational settings is an interesting development with implications for both children's learning and education professionals in the widest sense. Your participation will contribute to the debate.

What if something goes wrong?

I don't expect any problems to arise in this study. However, if you wish to complain about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of the study, you may address this to Professor Ken Jones, School of Public Policy and Professional Practice, Keele University, Keele, Staffs, ST5 5BG, k.w.jones@educ.keele.ac.uk, 01782 733 554

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

All of the research data that I collect during the study will be kept strictly confidential. Any information which has your name, address and any other identifying information, including your consent form will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Your anonymity will be assured in any publication arising from this study by removing individual participants' names, the names of their schools or settings and any other information that could identify the participants.

Who is organizing the research?

Paul Bartle

Contact for further information

p.e.bartle@educ.keele.ac.uk

01695 584 357

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Negotiating positions: a discourse-based exploration of the work of Teaching Assistants in English schools

Name of Principle Investigator: Paul Bartle

Please tick box

- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| 1 | I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without my legal rights being affected. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | I understand that data collected about me during this study will be anonymised before it is submitted for publication. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | I agree to take part in this study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | I agree to be contacted about possible participation in future research projects. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

CONSENT FORM (for use of quotes)

Title of Project: Negotiating positions: a discourse-based exploration of the work of Teaching Assistants in English schools

Name of Principle Investigator: Paul Bartle

Please tick box

- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| 1 | I am happy for any quotes to be used | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | I don't want any quotes to be used | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | I want to see any proposed quotes before making a decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Annex 8: A policy chronology

The table below presents a chronology of some selected policy documents from the past forty years. The list is not exhaustive. I have chosen the documents to show key 'policy moments' prior to 1997 whilst the 1997 - 2010 policy documents have been selected to show the 'policy moments' around:

- The New Labour foregrounding of education (1998 - 1999)
- The school workforce 're-modelling agenda' (2001 – 2003)
- The New Labour policy documents which presented their view of the state and public services (2006 – 2009)
- The more comprehensive and continuing 'remodelling' of the children's and young people's workforce as 'joined up' provision together with New Labour's view for the development of school-based members of that workforce (2004 – 2009).

Years	Parties in Government Significant Policy Documents
1976 - 1979	Minority Labour Government (including 'Lib-Lab Pact')
1976	Callaghan's 'Ruskin College Speech'
1978	Warnock Report (DfES, 1978)
1979 - 1997	Conservative Governments
1988	Education Reform Act
1993	Education Act
1996	Self-government for schools (DfEE, 1996)
1997 - 2010	New Labour Governments
1998	The Learning Age: A renaissance for a new Britain. (DfEE, 1998a) The National Literacy Strategy. (DfEE, 1998b) Teaching: High Status, High Standards. Standards for the Award of Qualified Teacher Status. (DfEE, 1998c) Teachers meeting the challenge of change. (DfEE, 1998d)
1999	The National Numeracy Strategy. (DfEE, 1999)
2001	Schools: Building on Success, Green Paper. (DfES, 2001a) Schools: Achieving success. White Paper. (DfES, 2001b)
2002	Education Act 2002 Time for standards: reforming the school workforce. (DfES, 2002a) Developing the Role of School Support Staff – Consultation. (DfES, 2002b) Developing the role of School Support Staff – Final Report. (DfES, 2002c)
2003	Raising Standards and Tackling Workload: A National Agreement. (ATL, DfES, GMB, NAHT, NASUWT, NEOST, PAT, SHA, TGWU,

	UNISON, WAG, 2003) Professional standards for higher level teaching assistants. (DfES/TTA, 2003d)
2004	Every Child Matters: an agenda for change. (DfES, 2004a) Five-year strategy for children and learners. (DfES, 2004c)
2005	Higher standards: Better schools for all – more choice for parents and pupils. White Paper. (DfES, 2005) Building the School Team. (TDA, 2005)
2006	Education and Inspections Act 2006 The UK Government's Approach to Public Service Reform – A Discussion Paper. (PMSU, 2006) Developing people to support learning: A skills strategy for the wider school workforce 2006 – 2009. (TDA, SWDB, 2006)
2007	Policy Review. Building on Progress: Public Services. (PMSU, 2007a) Policy Review. Building on Progress: The Role of the State. (PMSU, 2007b) The Children's Plan: Building brighter Futures. (DCSF, 2007) The Common Assessment Framework for Children and Young People: A guide for practitioners. (CWDC, 2007) National Occupational Standards for Supporting Teaching and Learning. (TDA, 2007a) Professional Standards for Higher Level Teaching Assistant Status. (TDA, 2007b) Professional Standards for Teachers: Why sit still in your Career? (TDA, 2007c)
2008	Excellence and fairness: Achieving world class public services. (Cabinet Office, 2008) 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy. (DCSF, 2008a) Being the Best for our Children: Releasing talent for teaching and learning. (DCSF, 2008b) A foundation degree framework for the children's workforce in schools. (TDA, 2008)
2009	School Workforce in England (Revisited). DCSF(2009a) Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system. (DCSF, 2009b) Transformational Government – our progress in 2008. (HM Government, 2009) Making a difference: Leading school workforce development. (TDA, 2009a) Strategy for the professional development of the children's workforce in schools 2009-12. (TDA, 2009b)
Post-May 2010	Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government
2010	The case for change. (DfE, 2010a) The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010. (DfE, 2010b)
2012	Teachers' Standards. (DfE, 2012)

Annex 9: Ethical approval of the research



KEELE
UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC SERVICES DIRECTORATE
RESEARCH SERVICES

8 April 2009



Dear Paul,

Re: Professional identities and policy: the evolving professional identities of teaching assistants

Thank you for submitting the above research proposal for ethical review. The proposal was reviewed at the Ethical Review Panel meeting on Thursday, 2 April 2009 and a number of points were raised. I should be grateful if you would respond to the following:

- Please clarify why there is a stated time limited of October 2010 for participants to withdraw from the study.
- Please revise the consent form and information sheet so they conform to university guidelines. Templates can be found on the Research & Enterprises website: www.keele.ac.uk/research/researchsupport/ethics.htm
- Please use a Keele University email address and telephone number in any correspondence relating to the study rather than a hotmail address.
- Please clarify the mechanisms to be used for recruiting participants e.g. how many schools will be covered and the number of teaching assistants per school and the ways in which their anonymity will be ensured.
- You must inform the Ethics Review Panel if you decide to interview other staff so that the panel can decide if subsequent ethical review will be required.

I should be grateful if you would address the above points and forward your response along with the amended letter and interview schedules to Michele Dawson ERP Administrator
m.dawson@uso.keele.ac.uk

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Michele Dawson ext. 33588.

Yours sincerely

M. Dawson

pp Dr Roger Beech
Chair – Ethical Review Panel

cc RI Manager



K E E L E
UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC SERVICES DIRECTORATE
RESEARCH SERVICES

6 May 2009



Dear Paul,

Re: Professional identities and policy: the evolving professional identities of teaching assistants

Thank you for submitting your revised project for review.

I am pleased to inform you that your project has been approved by the Ethics Review Panel.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

pp Dr Roger Beech
Chair – Ethics Review Panel.

cc RI Manager

Annex 10: Formal approval of the title of the thesis



K E E L E
UNIVERSITY



ACADEMIC SERVICES DIRECTORATE
GRADUATE SCHOOL

3 May 2011

Dear Mr Bartle

Re: Approved Thesis Title

I am writing to confirm the approved title for your thesis. The following title has been approved by your Research Institute Committee:

Negotiating positions: a discourse-based exploration of the work of Teaching Assistants in English schools

This is the title that should appear on your thesis when you submit it for examination. It must be reproduced exactly as above taking particular care with upper and lower case. It should not be varied without consent from your Research Institute Committee. Please note that your thesis cannot be accepted for submission if the title is different from that printed above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Eva Palenicek'.

Handwritten initials 'EP' in dark ink.

Eva Palenicek
Graduate School Officer

Cc: Director of Postgraduate Research
RI Postgraduate Administrator

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