Teaching Assistants becoming Primary School Teachers: Changing Professional Identities in communities of practice

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Abstract

This study explores the way that teacher identity is developed in teaching assistants (TAs) who train to teach, and the impact that being part of a community of practice has on this transition. The participants in this research were studying for a top-up degree which included recommendation for qualified teacher status (QTS) while they continued to work as TAs. A narrative inquiry approach was used to foreground the often overlooked voice of the TA in educational research. Findings showed that schools deployed TAs in a wide variety of ways, and this seemed to depend on individual skills and expertise of TAs, and on individual TA-teacher partnerships. However, it was also seen that despite recommendations from the seminal DISS report (Blatchford et al., 2009) and subsequent work by this team, schools do not always follow the recommendations made. The findings of this study also shows that membership of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) supports TAs in their practice. Relationships within the community of practice are of particular significance in their transition to becoming a teacher. I argue here that TAs and teachers can be seen to have a distinct 'teach*ing* identity' rather than having to adopt either a teach*er* or a TA identity. This study finds that the experience TAs gain as members of a school community of practice while working in the fuzzy liminal space between teacher and TA can support TAs who choose to train as teachers.

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Glossary/Acronyms

BAPE – BA (Hons) Primary Education with recommendation for QTS

CoP – Communities of practice

DfE – Department for Education

eRPD – electronic record of professional development

FdA – foundation degree

HEI – Higher Education Institute(s)

HLTA – Higher Level Teaching Assistant

ITT – Initial Teacher Training

GTP – Graduate Teacher Programme

NQT – Newly qualified teacher / ECT – Early Career Teacher

OU – Open University

PG – Post-graduate

PGCE – Post Graduate Certificate in Education

PTS – BA (Hons) Primary Teaching Studies with recommendation for QTS

QTS – Qualified Teacher Status

SBM – School based mentor *(a term specific to my HEI)*

SCITT – School Centred Initial Teacher Training

SD – School Direct

TA(s) – Teaching Assistant(s)

TSM – Teacher Supply Model

UBM – University based mentor *(a term specific to my HEI)*

UCET - Universities Council for the Education of Teachers

UG - Undergraduate

UQT – Unqualified teacher

Introductory placement – At my HEI, all primary QTS routes have an initial school placement which is designed to support trainees' initial transition to teacher training. It looks different on PTS, BAPE and PGCE programmes as training profile and prior experience are so varied. They last between 2 weeks (PTS) and 8 weeks (PGCE).

Developing placement – At my HEI, the expectations on longer term, assessed QTS placements align across programmes. The developing placement is usually around 7 weeks long and requires trainees to teach between 50% and 80% of the school week.

Extending placement – The extending, or final placement lasts usually around 8 weeks and requires trainees to teach 80% of the school week.

1. Introduction

Context

In my professional role, I lead an initial teacher training (ITT) programme BA (Hons) Primary Teaching Studies with QTS, known as PTS, which allows teaching assistants (TAs) who have successfully completed a foundation degree (FdA) in a relevant subject (for example, Learning Support or Early Childhood Studies) to complete a top-up undergraduate degree with QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) while continuing to work as TAs. The training involves TAs learning from experienced teachers in a TA role in their 'home school' (the setting in which the trainee is employed as a TA) and attending weekly university-based training. This is interspersed with full time, assessed placements which are supported by university-based staff.

At my institution, trainees on this route have had better outcomes against the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2013) over recent years in comparison to those on other training routes (Anon, 2020). The final expectations of trainees on all routes are the same and are moderated and quality assured by a range of school-based mentors (SBMs), university-based mentors (UBMs) and external examiners. Recent cohorts of PTS had outcomes of 75% of trainees being graded at 'outstanding', in comparison to the most recent 3-year undergraduate graduates 52% (outstanding) and the post/professional graduate certificate in education (PGCE) graduates whose attainment 48% (outstanding) (Anon 2020). However, in working with this group of trainees for a number of years, it has become apparent that the support and mentoring they receive from their school can vary greatly (Hobson and Malderez 2013; Carter, 2015). This often, anecdotally, has an impact on their success in part as evidenced by outcomes at the end of the programme, but perhaps also on individual trainees' preparedness to become effective and long- term members of the teaching profession.

While outcomes prompted me to consider the transition between TA and teacher, my research focussed on 'becoming a teacher' rather than 'meeting the Teachers' Standards' (DfE, 2013). This enabled me to concentrate in depth on the transition from TA to teacher, arguably a more personal, individual and enduring process than that of meeting the qualifying teaching standards. Zemblyas (2003) suggests that establishing '*emotional*

affinities with others' by recognising the role of emotion in the construction and transformation of teacher identity enables teachers to 'discover empowering tools to know their teaching [and] themselves' (2003, p.233). The impact that others have on identity renegotiation of TAs training to teach therefore is also of interest to me, particularly how others within the school community are part of this process.

I was interested to consider how the previous role of TA helps or hinders the professional development of this group of trainee teachers. It is accepted that adult learners 'bring particular dispositions to workplace learning, in particular their previous experiences' (Wojecki, 2007, p.168), but this group of trainees have unique and extensive first-hand experience. Trainees on other programmes generally are either are undergraduates who have recently left school, or postgraduates who have recently completed their undergraduate degree with often no more than a few days' observation of teachers, rather than extensive immersion within a school's community. The idea of the school as a community led me to Wenger's (1998) work on communities of practice (CoPs), so this provided a conceptual framework for my research. Adopting a constructivist, specifically narrative inquiry approach in my research allowed me to understand more fully the transition that this group of trainee teachers go through as they become teachers and undergo changes in their membership of school communities.

Aims of the research and research questions

The rationale for my research stemmed from my professional role in teacher education, supporting both TAs training to teach, others participating in more traditional training routes. As considered above, and while many TAs do go on to train to teach, a specific 'TA-to-teacher' training route is undertaken by a relatively small number of people both within my institution, and also across the country, and this is not explicitly recognised as a training route in the same way as schemes such as the 'Troops to Teachers' (DfE, 2018).

The lack of clarity over the role of the TA, and existing relationships within the school may present challenges as well as opportunities to TAs training to teach. Similarly, previous classroom experience may also have both positive and negative implications for this group of trainees, along with the additional conflicts that occur as a TA training to teach finds

themselves caught between their role as TA and their role as a trainee teacher, and also between the needs of their school and the requirements of the university as training provider. I hoped to gain greater understanding of all of these aspects to support and develop my role as a teacher educator. The aim of my research is therefore to consider how TAs become teachers, particularly investigating the challenges and opportunities that prior experience as a TA presents to these trainees, and also how teacher identity is formed.

Research questions:

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- **Being a TA: in what ways do the skills, knowledge and attributes of a TA support or challenge TAs who train to teach?**
- **Training to teach: How does the experience of being part of a school community impact on TAs who are becoming teachers?**
- **Reflecting on a change in professional identity: How and when is the teacher identity of the TA training to teach formed?**

Current situation and the gap in knowledge

Through experience of working with TAs training to teach, and working in initial teacher training (ITT) more generally, a number of tensions have become apparent:

- There is very little research that specifically considers TAs training to teach – although TAs frequently become teachers, this is not widely recognised as a specific training route.
- The support and mentoring offered by schools hosting trainee teachers is varied.
- There is a lack of clarity around the role of the TA and this leads to challenges and opportunities for them as they train to teach, and for those supporting them in their teacher training.

TAs training to teach

There is a paucity of literature which considers the training of TAs to teach, however some studies are relevant to the debate. Edmond (2010) interviewed 19 participants in her

research into TAs who were on or had completed foundation degree (FdA) level TA training. While Edmond's research is on a small scale and does not focus specifically on TAs training to teach, some of Edmond's participants went on to follow further teacher training routes. Edmond found that 'participation in the [FdA] was instrumental in claiming an 'intermediate' identity (not a teacher but 'more than a TA')' (Edmond, 2010, p.314). This came about as individuals developed expertise through study, had greater engagement with the teaching role and was in part based on the 'individual disposition of the TA' (Edmond, 2010, p.314) which particularly resonates with my research specifically how prior experience as a TA, and existing personal and professional relationships in the school impact on the transition between TA and teacher. Edmond's (2010) research concluded that in the construction of an 'intermediate' status (a status seen to be enhanced beyond the TA role), the relationship between those in a school's community is of more importance than meeting formal criteria - in the case of her research, Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) status, but in my research, meeting the requirements for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

Challenges faced relating to support and mentoring

The quality of support and mentoring is a challenge faced by all trainee teachers. As far back as the 19th century apprenticeship models relied upon teacher expertise, and because the quality of teachers varies greatly from school to school, the quality of training also varies (Hagger and MacIntyre, 2006). The quality and nature of the mentor support offered to trainees continues to vary between schools (Hobson and Malderez, 2013; Carter, 2015). The role of the mentor is much-debated (Wallace and Gravells, 2007; Fletcher and Mullen, 2012), but is a model relied upon at all levels of teacher development from that of the trainee teacher to the support networks between experienced head teachers. The mentoring role usually involves 'an experienced professional supporting a less experienced colleague' (Bolton, 2014, p.59), however, quality of mentoring varies when it is led by a single teacher (Haggar and McIntyre, 2006). This reflects common trainee feedback following school placements in my own experience, and while their criticisms are clearly open to bias, the majority of negative placement feedback is based on the perceived quality of the mentoring.

A systematic review of mentoring in education recognised that the majority of studies in the field consider relationships between the mentor and the mentee (Ghosh, 2012). This is potentially problematic for a TA training to teach in that it will involve changing an existing relationship, rather than creating a new relationship. Numerous studies into the role of TAs also highlight the importance of close relationships between teachers and TAs (Russell, Blatchford, Bassett, Brown and Martin, 2005; Collins and Simco, 2006). However as summarised from the extensive research by Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, Martin, Russell and Webster, 2009) in the influential *Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) Project* and followed up by some of the original authors in Russell, Webster and Blatchford's (2013) and Sharples, Webster and Blatchford's (2015) guidance reports which all focus on the deployment of the TA by the teacher, the relationship between the teacher and the TA, in very crude terms, involves the TA being used by the teacher as a resource. This arguably results in a relationship in which one person is 'in charge' of the other. The relationship between the teacher mentor and mentee (Reid and Jones, 1997; Robinson, Bingle and Howard, 2013), is different to that of the TA and the teacher. Adey (1997) proposed that the mentor should be a 'critical friend'; arguably a different type of relationship to that of the 'deployer' and the 'deployee'. The greater *experience* of the mentor is recognised and learnt from (Lee and Feng, 2007; Hobson, Ashby and Malderez, 2009), in a mentor-mentee relationship, whereas *training* (Blatchford et al., 2009) is expected in a TA-teacher relationship. Awayaa (2003 cited by Ghosh, 2012) argued that the mentor-mentee relationship is not hierarchical, although this is arguable when (as a third of the 33 studies reviewed by Ghosh agreed) the role involves assessment. Ghosh's (2012) review of mentoring literature is interesting in that it recognises a very broad understanding of what the role of 'mentor' encompasses. As discussed below, the definition of the role of TA is perhaps even more vague. It can be suggested therefore that the renegotiation of the relationship between a TA who is training to teach and their mentor is a complex element of this route into teaching.

Anecdotally, TAs on this route into teaching tended to become used to one way of doing things and were sometimes unwilling to see the potential value of alternative approaches because their experience is inevitably based on a narrow field of experience; 'my school does it this way'. Noble-Rogers agrees that a training system 'based around individual

schools could lead to parochialism, institutional conservatism and the training of teachers who might not be equipped with the transferable skills and knowledge that they will need for the range of schools they are likely to teach in during their careers' (2015). While all training routes are usually required to ensure trainees have met the Teachers' Standards in a range of schools (DfE, 2021), the need to consider a range of approaches to teaching relates back to the need for reflection – different approaches, answers or responses need to be considered (Dymoke and Harrison, 2008) and there is no single right answer when it comes to teaching (Haggar, 1997).

Given these tensions, my study aims to contribute to the field of knowledge relating to teacher education, specifically looking at the challenges and benefits of training TAs to teach.

2. Literature Review

The literature review is split into two parts to enable me to discuss literature relating to three interlinked aspects of my study and develop my understanding of ***what happens when a TA becomes a teacher***. It will first consider the role of the TA to enable me to understand my participants' prior experiences before embarking on a teacher training programme, linking to my first research question – **Being a TA: in what ways do the skills, knowledge and attributes of a TA support or challenge TAs who train to teach?** Secondly, I will review literature which discusses teacher training and CoPs to consider my second research question - **Training to teach: How does the experience of being part of a school community impact on TAs who are becoming teachers?** Here I will also consider professional identity formation in the field of teacher education to answer my third research question - **Reflecting on a change in professional identity: How and when is the teacher identity of the TA training to teach formed?**

2.1 The role of the TA

2.1.1 Being a TA

In aiming to consider the transition between TA and teacher, it is important to first consider the prior experiences of TAs. Although there have been many attempts to formalise the role (UNISON, NAHT, NET, MPTA, MITA & RTSA, 2016), there are no nationally agreed 'Teaching Assistants' Standards', despite extensive research into the deployment of TAs (Blatchford, et al. 2009). As such, there remains little agreement around the roles and responsibilities of TAs in English primary schools (Kerry, 2005; Collins and Simco, 2006; Syrnyk, 2018), with many reporting the ever-changing nature of the role over recent years (Clayton, 1993; Johnson, 2018). I will argue here that while large scale research remains focussed on the conceptualisation of TAs as a tool (Lehane, 2016) or resource whose efficacy should be judged solely on pupil outcomes (Blatchford et al., 2009), small scale research which values the voice of the TA (Roffey-Barentsen and Watt, 2014; Bowles, Radford and Bakopoulou, 2018; Syrnyk, 2018) and the wider role of the TA (Johnson, 2018) provides us with insight into the roles that TAs undertake, particularly noting the effective professional relationships between teachers and TAs that successfully support teachers and pupils (Devecchi and Rouse, 2010; Lehane, 2016).

In the England, teachers are required to have minimum qualifications: a degree and GCSEs at the equivalent of grade 4 or above in maths, English and science (for primary teaching), and in maintained schools, a teaching qualification - Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) (DfE, 2021b). Nationally agreed criteria against which a teacher's success is judged are used in training and throughout a teacher's career (DfE, 2013). In contrast, in England, there are no national TA standards or minimum required qualifications for teaching assistants beyond a requirement in most cases for GCSEs in English and maths (NCS, 2020). HLTA standards were published in 2007 (TDA, 2007), but standards for TAs have yet to become national policy. A move was made towards the implementation of standards akin to those required to be met by teachers (DfE, 2013) by a working group set up by the government, which resulted in the publication of the '*Professional Standards for Teaching Assistants*' (UNISON et al., 2016). However, as it was then decided that the government would not endorse these standards, they were only able to be published as guidance rather than policy. As such, nearly 'anyone' can be a TA depending on the qualifications required by each school (NCS, 2020). There is

little evidence that continued professional development (CPD) for TAs goes much beyond in-service training (Cajkler, Sage, Tennant, Tiknaz, Tucjer and Taylor, 2007; Dunne, Goddard and Woolhouse, 2008a; Blatchford et al., 2009,) or that appraisal and performance review occurs (Russell et al., 2013), although Johnson (2018) found that TAs with access to training felt they were a more integrated member of school communities. It is accepted that there is very little time for TAs to plan with and feed back to teachers (Russell, Webster and Blatchford, 2013; Roffey-Barentsen and Watt, 2014) and their roles are not clearly defined (Mansaray, 2006; Clarke and Visser, 2019). In addition, teachers are not seen to be well-trained to deploy TAs (Blatchford et al., 2009), let alone to train them. This appears to provide challenging working conditions for a TA who may or may not be qualified, perhaps has only limited in-house training, probably is not supported by an appraisal process and has little time to engage in more informal conversations that could support their professional development with teachers who are ill-prepared to deploy them and have little clarity over what their TA's role should involve.

2.1.2 What do TAs do?

Wide variation in deployment practices makes it difficult to define a precise role for the TA. Historically, the role of TA has been seen as one of 'carer, parent helper, and/or substitute mother' and pejoratively, a 'Mums' army' (Ainscow, 2000, cited in Kerry, 2005) with most taking on the role 'without any experience at all' (Dunne, Goddard and Woolhouse., 2008b, p.242). Research has consistently shown that there is lack of clarity surrounding the role in the UK (Mansaray, 2006; Clarke and Visser, 2019). Literature into the TA role in other countries similarly shows lack of clarity over what the role encompasses for example Angelides, Constantinou and Leigh (2009) writing about paraprofessionals in Cyprus, Takala (2007) who noted a similar range of terms used in Finnish schools as used in the UK, but settling on classroom assistants, and Giangreco (2009) discussing one-to-one paraprofessionals in the USA. In the UK, Kerry (2005) blamed this on a governmental shift in focus from the role of the TA to the workloads of teachers in 2003 (DfES, 2003a), however the role has been 'changing' for more than half a century (Clayton, 1993; Clarke, 2019).

The Deployment of TAs.

The National Agreement between most teaching unions (DfES, 2003) found that TAs needed to take a direct role in covering classes to enable teachers to have planning, preparation and assessment time. This remodelling of the workforce was something which schools were not prepared for (Hammersley-Fletcher and Adnett, 2009) and arguably set in motion the unhelpful blurring of the line between TA and teacher and a dramatic increase in the number of TAs in schools (Johnson, 2018) and the later large scale seminal work by Blatchford et al.'s (2009) as argued by members of the team, the largest piece of educational research into the work of TAs carried out at the time in the UK (Russell et al. 2013). In 2003, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DSCF) and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) tasked Peter Blatchford of the UCL Institute of Education, to lead a study designed to 'obtain reliable data on the deployment and characteristics of support staff and the impact of support staff on pupil outcomes and teacher workload over a 5-year period (2003-2008)' (Blatchford et al., 2009, p.1). The outcome of this research was the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project, one of the 40 landmark studies to impact on education in the last 40 years (BERA, 2013). The main finding presented by the media (for example, BBC, 2009) was that 'the more support pupils received, the less

progress they made' and that teachers were ill-trained to manage TAs (Blatchford et al., 2009). However, less incendiary findings were also presented in the report itself; Blatchford et al. (2009) recognised as seen in earlier research (McVittie, 2005) that there was insufficient time for teachers to plan with TAs, but as in their earlier research (Blatchford, Martin, Moriarty, Bassett and Goldstein, 2002) that 'support staff had a positive effect on teachers' workloads, level of job satisfaction and levels of stress' (Blatchford et al., 2009, p. 2) and that teachers still felt that TAs had a positive impact on the quality of teaching.

Earlier research by Blatchford et al. (2002) had shown that TA 'support in classes varied in terms of its effectiveness [and] did not show clear evidence of the benefits of classroom support on children's educational progress' (p. 62). The majority of Blatchford et al.'s (2002) conclusions at this time focussed on qualitative results, finding that there was a need to ensure support for TAs was carefully managed, communication and planning between teacher and TA was needed and that training was required which should directly link to what was planned for lessons – themes which recurred the DISS report (Blatchford et al., 2009) as well as in the research team's later work (Russell et al., 2013, Sharples et al., 2015).

Following DISS, the authors went on to carry out further smaller scale studies. The Effective Deployment of Teaching Assistants (EDTA) project (Blatchford, Webster and Russell, 2012) looked at different ways TAs can be used. It reminded readers that clarification at a national level of the role and deployment was essential. This is yet to be decided, although the EEF has plans to publish findings regarding the efficacy of the Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants (MITA) trial in the summer of 2021 (MITA n. d. b). The Making a Statement (MaSt) report (Webster and Blatchford, 2013) considered the teaching and support of pupils in primary schools who had a statement of special educational needs (SEN) found that pupils with a statement spent over 25% of their time away from their class and this level of interaction was detrimental to these pupils' interactions with teachers and peers. It also echoed the DISS project findings showing that the 'appropriateness and quality of pedagogy for statemented pupils is unlikely to close the attainment gaps' because there are gaps in teachers' and TAs' knowledge about how to meet the needs of these pupils. The report again recommended better preparation for TAs working with pupils with SEN. The results of this project were published in *Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants* (Russell, A.,

Webster, R. and Blatchford, P., 2013) which aimed to support school leaders the deployment of TAs. This text recommended that schools put in place a better appraisal for TAs. The pedagogical and non-pedagogical role of TAs was also acknowledged with an implication that school leaders should define roles for TAs who would be 'classroom helpers' (p. 45) along with TAs with pedagogical responsibility, alluding to different levels of TAs, but does not prescribe who should do tasks such as 'cutting and sticking'. Russell et al., (2013) briefly considered the cover for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time categorising this as 'supervision' rather than teaching and recommended that SLTs consider carefully which individuals on their staff are assigned this role. However, covering classes for teacher absence was not considered. The allocation of TAs across a school is briefly considered by Russell et al., (2013), who strongly recommend movement away from the 'velcro model' of TA deployment whereby TAs are velcroed to one particular child (usually with SEN) and refer to models of class-, year group- and subject-based TAs. However, the fail to consider the reality in many schools which cannot afford to employ TAs for every class, year group or subject. Russell et al., (2013) recommend SLTs provide in-house training to develop TAs pedagogical skills, as well as external training. They also argued that 'TAs and teachers should…receive…induction into the school's perception of all aspects of the work done by TAs' (Russell et al., 2013, p. 75).

Skipp and Hopwood's review - *The Deployment of Teaching Assistants in Schools* for the DfE in 2019 noted nearly as many challenges of TA deployment as benefits including some school-based challenges such as recruitment, lack of opportunity for training and the need for TA and teacher absence to be covered, and further sector-wide challenges including funding, low pay, lack of career progression, changing cultures, lack of value, increased complexity and numbers of children with SEND, changing parental perceptions and challenges arising from government policies (Skipp and Hopwood, 2019). The fact that researchers such as Skipp and Hopwood still note a lack of consistency in the deployment of TAs 10 years on from the DISS report show that not only is this an ongoing contested area in the field, but also that despite very large-scale research, there remains a need to understand further the deployment of TAs in schools in order to ensure effective practice is taking place.

Defining the 'pedagogical role' of the TA

Recent research suggests that the focus continues to centre on the pedagogical role of TAs (Clarke, 2019), a focus arguable influenced by the prominence of the DISS report (Blatchford et al., 2009). Following their work on the DISS report, some of the authors went on to consider the effects of TA support on eight dimensions of learning (distractibility, task confidence, motivation, disruptiveness, independence, relationships with other pupils, completion of assigned work and following instructions from adults) which they used to assess pupils' approaches to learning (PAL) over a year; teachers found that TAs had little impact on these dimensions of learning (Webster, Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, Russell and Anthony, 2011) . They also analysed TA impact on pupils' academic progress using (the subsequently discontinued) National Curriculum sub-levels to quantify academic progress over time, again finding that TAs had little or no positive impact. As a result, Webster et al. (2011) recommended that if TAs were to retain a pedagogical role that predominantly focussed on teaching, supporting and interacting with pupils, further consideration of their preparedness, deployment and practice was required. However, they also presented an alternative; to reframe the TA role as non-pedagogical which they suggested could encompass the wider dimensions of learning considered in their study. Literature suggests that a hybrid model in which TAs adopt both pedagogical and non-pedagogical roles persists (Skipp and Hopwood, 2019).

'Teaching Assistant' – is this the right term to use?

Literature refers to support staff in schools using a variety of names, for example, learning support assistants (LSAs), classroom assistants (CAs) or paraprofessionals; as many as 48 different job titles for people who might be described as TAs were suggested by Smith, Whitby and Sharp (2004), and as above, researchers internationally also note a similar range of terms (Takala, 2007). In the UK, higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) are also included in some studies and although this role does differ slightly to that of TAs (TTA, 2016; Johnson, 2018), this is not discussed in depth here. Recent government publications and documentation refer to teaching assistants (e.g. Skipp and Hopwood, 2019; DfE, 2019a). For clarity, unless directly quoting the work of others who have used an alternative title, I will refer to all using the term 'teaching assistant' (TA).

Arguably, simplification of the term results in an important nuance being lost. The term 'teaching assistant' in itself appears flawed; researchers such as Webster et al., (2011) have shown that TAs have little impact on pupils' learning; what could be seen as the 'teaching' element of the job title, and this perhaps implies that the 'assistant' aspect should be of greater focus – helping the teacher and the class (Eyres, Cable, Hancock and Turner,2004), rather than attempting to fulfil the role of some sort of 'assistant teacher'. Johnson (2018) argued that the 'array of terms [used to refer to TAs] is indicative of the diversity and continuing fluidity of the role'. This 'diversity' of 'fluidity' is presented by some (Mansaray, 2006) as positive and helpful, but by others (Johnson, 2018) as a barrier which contributes to the lack of clarity. Mansaray's findings suggested that the role of TA is 'open, ambiguous, and ambivalent' in nature (2006, p. 171). This ambiguity is widely recognised but the widely recognised vagueness which surrounds the role (Eyres et al. 2004; Kerry, 2005; Clarke and Visser, 2019), is often seen as problematic (e.g. Johnson, 2018). However, Mansaray (2006) argued that the role of the TA is valuable *because* of its openness, not restricted by the vagueness of the definition of the role.

What else do TAs do?

The confusion over the role's title perhaps is a contributory factor to the lack of clarity about what the role involves. Research finds that many teachers have positive views about the work of TAs (Barkham, 2008; Johnson, 2018). I present a criticism of Blatchford et al.'s (2009) work in that it failed to consider in depth the value of what TAs do beyond the pedagogical role, or even the 'wider pedagogical role' as defined by Webster et al. (2011). Tasks such as putting up displays, dealing with medical needs or photocopying still need doing and arguably contribute towards learning. The positive views from those working with TAs that persist may be based on a more holistic and qualitative 'on the ground' understanding of the entire role; teachers, children and TAs themselves consider the wider role of the TA rather than just their impact on pupil progress which Blatchford et al. define as 'pupil's academic progress over the year (based on National Curriculum levels and Key Stage test results' (2009, p. 3)

In Scotland, Woolfson and Truswell (2005) conducted a small-scale study, the Classroom Assistant Project (CAP) which aimed, along with improving the quality of learning in the

classroom, to have a positive impact on the personal and social development of pupils and to encourage parental involvement with children responding to earlier research which suggested inconclusive findings about TA impact on pupil progress. Perhaps because of the small scale of the study (five TAs) and the diverse prior experience and career aspirations of the TAs in the study, Woolfson and Truswell (2005) found that the impact of TAs on pupil progress appeared to be variable, however they reported that their data showed positive results against their research aims which focussed on what could be described as the wider role of TAs rather than solely on pupil progress; specifically regarding their impact on personal and social development of children, and by encouraging parental involvement in children's learning. Similarly, Syrnyk's (2018) research found that the nurturing skills of TAs had not been discussed in research.

In his small-scale exploratory study into the roles and experiences of TAs in primary schools, Mansaray suggested that 'TAs are pivotal to what goes on in schools' (2006, p. 175), but Blatchford, Russell, Bassett, Brown and Martin (2007) argued that perhaps teachers value the work of the TAs for the simple reason that they allow the teacher more time with children. However, this contradicts TAs' views that suggest they believe they spend more time with individual children in the class; 'they [teachers] don't really know what makes them tick really and we [TAs] felt that we did' (Lehane, 2016, p. 12).

Some research foregrounds the perspectives of the child in discussions regarding of the role of the TA and shows that the primary aged children with whom TAs work also value TAs. Eyres, Cable, Hancock and Turner (2004) conducted a small-scale study (78 children in six primary schools) into their perceptions of the adults in their classrooms. Eyres et al. (2004) pointed out that conducting research from the perspective of the child was challenging, not least because at times passing adults would interrupt and prompt children, suggesting the reliability of the findings could at times be compromised. However, they found that while children knew which adults were teachers, and which were TAs, they were unclear whose job it was to do certain tasks in the classroom Eyres et al. (2004). They found that children at times perceived the TA as lower status than the teacher as they tend to work with the lowest ability group. They also observed that there was an overall impression that while

children realised that teachers and TAs must be doing different things, the children found it hard to provide the evidence to support this.

Conversely, In Australia, Fraser and Meadows (2008) also investigated children's perceptions. They used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews and found that children valued the work of TAs, perceiving them to be useful and helpful. This group of children were able to explain the difference between the teacher and TA in terms of training and responsibility and were able to discuss how the TAs worked with them. This differed from Eyres et al.'s (2004) findings in the UK four years previously; contextual differences between the two studies aside, it could be argued that Fraser and Meadows's results are more reliable in that they considered a much larger sample size (419 children surveyed to Eyres et al.'s 78 interviews). Perhaps to explain these contradictory findings, while Eyre's et al. (2004) adopted an open-ended questioning approach, to allow for ease of completion Fraser and Meadows (2008) employed a tick box or closed questioning approach which could have unintentionally directed the children.

What tasks do TAs do?

Various studies aim to provide a list of the many tasks that TAs do or should do. The table below (table 1) provides a summary of some of these and the studies from which they were taken. Here, I have suggested three categories of work that TAs do building on the basis of Webster et al.'s (2011) definitions:

1. Direct pedagogical tasks – teaching supporting and interacting with pupils (Webster et al., 2011)
2. Wider pedagogical tasks – supporting PAL (see above) (Webster et al., 2011)
3. Non-pedagogical tasks – other tasks found in literature (see below) to be carried out by TAs.

Task	Source	1. Direct Pedagogical 2. Wider pedagogical 3. Non-pedagogical
Sharpen pencils	Butt and Lowe, 2012;	3
Creates/prepares resources and tidies up	Butt and Lowe, 2012; Eyres, Cable Hancock and Turner, 2004; Kerry, 2005; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Mansaray 2006;	3
Makes and plays games	Butt and Lowe, 2012; Fraser and Meadows, 2008;	3
Photocopies	Butt and Lowe, 2012; Fraser and Meadows, 2008;	3
Laminate/ cuts things out	Butt and Lowe, 2012; Fraser and Meadows, 2008;	3
Help children stay on task	Butt and Lowe, 2012;	2
Modify activities to cater for children's needs	Butt and Lowe, 2012;	2
Help children to read	Eyres et al., 2004; Kerry, 2005;	1
Listen to children read	Butt and Lowe, 2012; Eyres et al., 2004;	2
Work with children with SEN	Butt and Lowe, 2012; Russell et al., 2005; Wren, 2017;	1,2
Supporting individual pupils (including 'if stuck')	Butt and Lowe, 2012; Kerry, 2005; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Russell et al., 2005; Wren, 2017;	1,2
Maintain assessment records	Butt and Lowe, 2012; Eyres et al., 2004;	3
Support teachers	Butt and Lowe, 2012; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Mansaray 2006;	1,2,3
Take small groups for specific subjects or groups with SEN	Butt and Lowe, 2012; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Butt and Lance, 2005; Russell et al., 2005; Mansaray 2006; Wren, 2017;	1,2
Settle the children	Butt and Lowe, 2012;	2
Keep children focussed	Butt and Lowe, 2012; Eyres et al., 2004; Kerry, 2005; Mansaray 2006; Wren, 2017;	2
Support behaviour management	Butt and Lowe, 2012;	2
Provide modelling	Eyres et al., 2004;	1,2
Corrects children's work	Eyres et al., 2004;	2,3
Explains things	Kerry, 2005;	1,2
Supervising classes / covering for teacher absence	Kerry, 2005;	1
Lunchtime activities	Fraser and Meadows, 2008;	3
After school clubs	Kerry, 2005; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Mansaray 2006; Wren, 2017;	3
Pastoral support	Kerry, 2005; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Butt and Lance, 2005;	3
Taking registers	Kerry, 2005;	3
Running errands	Kerry, 2005; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Butt and Lance, 2005; Gibson, Oliver and Dennison, 2015;	3
Putting up displays	Kerry, 2005; Fraser and Meadows, 2008;	3
Menial tasks – e.g. paint pot washing	Kerry, 2005; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Butt and Lance, 2005;	3
Marking work	Kerry, 2005; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Mansaray 2006; Wren, 2017;	3
Supporting children's physical and/or medical needs	Fraser and Meadows, 2008;	3
Making cups of tea	Fraser and Meadows, 2008;	3
Teaches children	Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Kerry, 2005;	1
Helps children on the computer	Butt and Lowe, 2012;	1,2

Note: This is not a comprehensive analysis of all literature which discusses TA tasks, but a sample of studies based on the perceptions of children, TAs and teachers over the past 15 years.
Tasks here have been paraphrased. The word 'children' is used where studies have referred to children, pupils or students.

Table 1 – TA tasks from literature

As can be seen here, the list is extensive and presents many tasks that could be categorised as within the 'wider role' of the TA, as well as many which directly relate to teaching or supporting pupil progress – or 'pedagogical' tasks, although arguably everything that goes on in a school has the ultimate aim to support the education of its pupils. Although not evidence-based, the National Careers Service (NCS) currently suggest the following tasks could be carried out by TAs:

- 'help teachers prepare lesson materials and equipment
- get the classroom ready for lessons and clear away afterwards
- work with groups and individual pupils to make sure they understand their work and stay focussed
- watch, record and report pupils' progress to teachers
- supervise group activities, including outings and sports events
- provide a safe and healthy environment and follow safeguarding procedures
- help teachers manage class behaviour
- look after children who are upset or unwell
- lead classes with help from the teacher' (NCS, 2020)

As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, although my aim is to consider the process of TAs *becoming teachers*, not *qualifying to teach,* it is important to acknowledge the synergy between what TAs do, and what teachers do. In order to explain this, I have used the table above to make links to the current UK Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2013) in Appendix 1. This mapping exercise (based on three teacher educators' views) illustrates how what a TA does might be seen to be on the periphery of the teacher role and supporting the idea that the roles overlap. The fact that so many tasks in both research and current guidance can be classified as pedagogical not only illustrates the potential for 'role creep' (Blatchford et al. 2009), but also implies that training is required for the TA role.

2.1.3 Training of TAs

Work by Rob Webster, one of the original DISS research team and lead researcher in the '*Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants*' (MITA) project within UCL's Institute of Education built on the findings of the DISS report (Blatchford et al., 2009). Undoubtedly MITA guidance (Russell, Webster and Blatchford, 2013) and Webster and Russell's subsequent work with Jonathan Sharples, '*Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants'* (2015), has had some lasting impact in schools. Skipp and Hopwood's (2019) review showed that schools in 2018 were making use of Webster, Blatchford and Sharples et al.'s recommendations; for example, TAs were seen to be working with a greater range of ability groups to ensure that pupils with SEND had access to the teacher rather than being 'velcroed' to a TA. However, they showed that there was a lack of consistency in TA training.

In their report, Sharples et al. (2015) used randomised control trials (RCTs) from seven EEF evaluations to show that interventions led by TAs in one-to-one or small group settings showed 'a consistent impact on attainment of approximately three to four months' progress (Sharples et al., 2015) – in itself a questionable claim particularly given that in 2014, the government removed the 'distracting and over generalising' (DfE, 2015) NC assessment levels which may have been the only tool by which to assess progress in such detail because as explained by the then Education Secretary Nick Gibb, there was a need for a 'more secure assessment system' (DfE, 2015). However, Sharples et al. (2015) highlighted that this was only shown when TAs work in settings with high quality support and training using high-quality and structured interventions. Dawson, Yeomans and Bown, (2018) would perhaps suggest the methods adopted in this research are flawed; they argue that randomised control trials (RCTs) are not feasible for schools to implement leading to varied implementation and comparisons being made between groups in which some factors could not be controlled; teachers', TAs' and children's' constant and ongoing interactions are likely to render RCTs an inappropriate methodology in educational settings.

Both Russell et al.'s (2013) and Sharples et al.'s (2015) reports informed training materials (MITA online course, n.d. a.) recommended by the EEF. However, I offer a number of criticisms of their recommendations specifically in regard to time constraints (Butt and Lance, 2005; McVittie, 2005; Roffey-Barentsen and Watt, 2014) and the ongoing lack of

clarity in the role of the TA (Kerry, 2005; Butt and Lowe, 2012; Syrnyk, 2018). In the EEF's online training (MITA, n.d. a.), Sharples argued that interventions should be carefully planned, resourced and prepared. Users were also reminded that evaluation of interventions must show demonstrable effects and this quality assurance would require time and carry financial implications. Research shows that time to communicate is already lacking (Butt and Lowe, 2005; McVittie, 2005; Blatchford 2009; Radford, Bosanquet, Webster, Blatchford, Rubie-Davis, 2014; Lehane, 2016) but arguably, recommendations made in EEF training materials require even more time to be spent by teachers to train and support TAs, which presents a further challenge; as seen in earlier research the training of teachers to deploy TAs is seen to be insufficient. Despite Calder's (2003) negative views on 'in house' training, she recognised that there was at the time, little or no focus during initial teacher education on how teachers should work with TAs. Writing later with Grieve (Calder and Grieve, 2004) again deficiencies were found in the training of teachers to manage TAs. Given that at the time, Calder and Grieve both held senior positions as lecturers in education at the University of Strathclyde, recognition that teacher education was falling short appears to be an honest appraisal of the situation. This was later supported by Barkham (2008), another teacher educator, who also noted this shortcoming in initial teacher education (ITE) and Blatchford et al., (2009) who found that 75% of teachers reported never having had training to support their effective deployment of support staff, and of those who had, only half found it useful.

Skipp and Hopwood's (2019) report noted that some schools had built in formal time for TAs to meet, plan and attend training, accepting that in financially challenged schools, there was limited time 'for planning and preparation for TAs as they were being stretched across more pupils and tasks' (2019; p 39).

While the MITA said that TAs 'can have a positive impact in the classroom if there is a clear consensus…about their role, purpose and contribution' (MITA, n.d.a), they presented no clear definition which might conclude the long-standing debate around the nature of the TA role (Johnson, 2018; Clarke and Visser, 2019). I argue that without a clear definition of the role, training for the role cannot be generalised. The MITA (n.d.a) training did make repeated reference to 'clear delineation of what pedagogical role TAs are to play in the

school' but without clearly explaining what this may look like. However, overall, the message from Russell, Webster and Blatchford, (2013) and Sharples et al. (2015) supported earlier research (Howes, Farrell, Kaplan and Moss, 2003 in Farrell, Alborz, Howes and Pearson, 2009); although TAs were at the time not effective in enhancing pupil progress, there was hope that TAs could have a positive impact on outcomes given appropriate training and support. Other studies also support the idea that TA support can have a positive impact on attainment, specifically in literacy (Savage and Carless, 2005; Sharples, Webster and Blatchford, 2015), and this is supported by more recent research by Johnson (2018) who presented a positive model for effective TA deployment in her study of TAs who trained alongside teachers to deliver a literacy intervention programme. A common theme emerges; positive impacts on pupil attainment are only seen in situations where there is effective training in place for TAs.

TA qualifications and training

As far back as 2003, Quicke suggested that following an HMI/Ofsted (Ofsted, 2003) report into TAs in primary schools, TAs should be better trained in order to fulfil anticipated changes to the TA workforce. Although formal TA training is still not required in primary schools Level 3 qualifications are currently recommended by the National Careers Service (NCS, 2020) for those interested in becoming a TA. Other qualifications for TAs are available; Dunne et al.'s (2008a; 2008b) work considered the career trajectories of TAs choosing to study for a FdA in supporting teaching and learning. Dunne et al.'s work was interesting in relation to my own study, as my participants completed a very similar FdA before enrolling on the top-up degree to gain their full degree and QTS. Dunne et al. found that following graduation, a third of their 79 participants had been given more responsibility in their TA careers, a third had been promoted and a third had not noticed any change in their careers (Dunne et al., 2008as). The TAs' perceptions about the reasons for their promotion or change in responsibility were varied (Dunne et al., 2008a) and their diverse outcomes and explanations may suggest that the attainment of an FdA did not directly result in an altered career trajectory for TAs – being more qualified than other TAs did not have an impact on their deployment in school. A key finding of Dunne et al.'s research was that a third of their TA/FdA graduate participants went on to later gain QTS. Dunne et al. (2008a) saw this as evidence that FdA study 'motivates students onto further study' (2008a). However, based

on the resemblance of the sample to the group of students with whom I work, in most cases these students begin the FdA with no goal other than becoming a teacher. This therefore would imply that Dunne et al. did not consider motivation from early enough in their participants' career journeys.

Despite reminding readers that TAs have been perceived to be an undertrained army of substitute mothers, Dunne et al. (2008b) found that TAs felt that undertaking a qualification earned them greater respect from other members of staff, and this allowed them greater involvement in what was happening in the school. However, rather than relying on a formal qualification, pre-DISS, it appeared that most schools opted for 'in house' training. In considering TA training specifically, Calder's (2003) small-scale study in six Scottish primary schools found that TAs learned from the teacher, however learning 'on-the-job' resulted in incidental, unplanned and unsystematic training. This was still the case when Dunne et al. (2008b) also found that there was an assumption that all training for TAs would happen 'on the job', and at the time of the DISS report (Blatchford et al., 2009a) - training and development opportunities were limited, but the training that did take place for support staff was generally school-based. This is supported by the perspective of TAs themselves, who in Syrnyk's (2018) study felt that experiential learning was the only training for their role.

'Patchy' and 'un-coordinated' (Cajkler et al., 2007) training for TAs is perhaps due to different practices in different schools, but also may be due to the different skills, knowledge and experience each TA possesses. McVittie (2005) recommended that TAs needed training that supported them to build on their existing skills. TAs come from a wide variety of backgrounds, with a broad range of prior training and qualifications (Russell et al., 2005), therefore arguably require personalised training rather than an approach that suggests 'one size fits all'. Butt and Lowe (2012) similarly identified that a range of training needs were required for TAs. However, given that personalised training would require more time than a standard form of training delivered to all, lack of time again presents itself as a problem resulting in perhaps insurmountable challenge given the financial constraints of school budgets.

2.1.4 Aspects of the TA role that are beneficial for TAs training to teach

The strength of the DISS study (Blatchford et al., 2009a) lay in its huge scale (considering just one method utilised, 20,000 questionnaires were completed), in terms of length and participation. However, researchers continue to call for consideration of the TA voice in the consideration of the work that TAs do (Lehane, 2016; Clarke, 2019), indicating that large scale quantitative studies such as the DISS report do not present the full picture when considering the work of individual TAs 'on the ground' in English primary schools because the voice of the TA is not considered (Roffey-Barentsen and Watt, 2014; Syrnyk, 2018; Bowles et al., 2018). Smaller scale, quantitative research which focusses on the voice of the TA, or of the teachers and children with whom they work, highlight aspects of the role of the TA that are of interest when considering the transition between TA and teacher.

While reporting a positive impact on academic progress, Johnson who studied TAs training to work with teachers on a literacy intervention programme, found that 'TAs existed along a continuum between fragmentation and integration' (Johnson, 2018, p. 734 - see table 2 below). Although not necessarily resulting in a simplistic finding that the most 'integrated' TAs delivered the most successful interventions, it is interesting to consider the place of the TA within a school in relation to my own research; Johnson argued that where there was 'fragmentation…there was evidence that the TA's effectiveness in working with children was compromised' (2018, p. 734). Her term 'integration' aligns closely with aspects of CoPs (Wenger, 1998).

Indicators of integration	Indicators of fragmentation
TA has access to good quality CPD on an ongoing basis	TA feels unable to access training for CPD
TA perceives that support is available if needed	TA perceives that support is minimal or unavailable
TA has good communication with the class teacher and is linked to a particular member of staff	TA has little communication with the class teacher
TA has good communication with the SLT	TA has little or no communication with the SLT
TA perceives that her voice is heard.	TA perceives that she has no voice.
TA has clear timetable and is largely able to keep to it.	TA has timetable but this is frequently abandoned.
TA perceives that she is valued and respected.	TA perceives that she is not valued and respected.
TA feels 'in control' despite flexibility of role	TA feels out of control within the flexibility of the role.

Table 2- Indicators of integration from Johnson, 2018, p. 734

Johnson's (2018) findings showed that: increasing levels of confidence allowed TAs to act autonomously; that 'affiliation' (e.g. the joint training of TAs and teachers) fostered ongoing, informal dialogue which appeared to be more focussed on pupil needs; and that joint training had facilitated greater coherence and integration of TAs in schools which resulted in TAs being effectively deployed and feeling highly valued. Johnson's research found that 'indirect communication contributed to a sense of being both detached and undervalued' (2018, p.734) supporting earlier studies (Woolfson and Truswell, 2005; McVittie, 2005) which show that communication and liaison between teachers and TAs was of great importance and implying that there continues to be inconsistency in the quality of communication between teachers and TAs. Johnson's model highlights various aspects of the TA role that others have also considered.

Relationships and collaboration

A theme that is also apparent in other studies (Woolfson and Truswell, 2005; Collins and Simco, 2005) is the recommendation for greater collaboration between professionals in schools, and the importance TA-teacher relationships (Barkham, 2008; Collins and Simco, 2006). Arguably how a relationship is formed and how effective it is, relies on the individuals involved. This aligns with the findings of Lehane's study of secondary TAs which noted the importance of relationships; 'communication and collaboration is dependent on rapport and relationships and that this is personal and subject to teacher disposition, rather than a matter of professional routine or school systems' (Lehane, 2016, p.12). Slater and Glazeley (2018) considered the specific nature of the relationship suggesting that regarding the teacher as the 'more knowledgeable other' (Vygotsky, 1987) in the teacher-TA relationship is important but a re-conceptualisation of the relationship, or partnership, between the teacher and the TA is required; a relationship based on 'mutuality rather than difference and hierarchy' (Slater and Glazeley, 2018, p.15) would better recognise the importance of TAs' subject knowledge, pedagogical skills and the opportunity for collaboration between TAs and teachers.

Slater and Glazeley's (2018) work presented a set of six models of how TAs work with children in the classroom focussing on the quality of learning for children working with TAs. These models also can be used to begin to consider how a TA may learn about teaching.

Slater and Glazeley's (2018) 'island', 'container' and 'separate entity' TAs, provided a range of approaches to TA deployment which generally resulted in pupils and TAs having little direct contact with the teacher. However, 'conduit for learning', 'partner' and 'expert' TAs all required collaborative working relationships to enable joint planning, playing to each other's strengths and crucially, provided opportunity for the TA to learn about teaching through experience.

Characteristics of TAs and teachers

Although with limited research on which to draw, I felt it was useful to briefly examine the characteristics of the TA in order to be able to consider whether this had an impact on TAs becoming teachers. Dunne et al. found that both primary and secondary TAs felt that the essential TA characteristics were 'adaptability, patience, sensitivity, empathy, teamwork, sense of humour and listening skills' (2008b, p.241). Blatchford et al. concurred that TAs needed to be adaptable and also found that 'It was clear from the case study data that the 'goodwill' of support staff was vital to their deployment in schools' (Blatchford et al., 2009, p.5). Teachers in Butt and Lowe's study (2012) noted that TAs need to have initiative, and have good relationships with children, as well as having behaviour management skills, as supported by Clarke (2021) and skills in literacy and numeracy. TAs in Butt and Lowe's (2012) study suggested that there is a need for TAs to have 'people skills' and be patient, calm and have a sense of humour. Wilson and Bedford (2008) found that personal characteristics such as being able to be proactive and take initiative were important alongside open-mindedness, conscientiousness and having good communication and organisational skills.

Research shows that 'there is very little agreement as to what constitutes and ideal teacher' (Clarke, 2016, p. 40). However, traits that are seen in TAs are also present in teachers:

> 'Together, human capital [traits such as being caring, friendly, patient and resilient], social capital [forming relationships], and decisional capital [the ability to make decisions in situations where there is no guidance to follow] make up professional capital, which is considered to be a vital component in bring together what is required to produce high standards for teachers' (Twiselton and Goepel, 2018, p. 22).

Malderez et al., (2007) identified similar characteristics in teachers which also align with those seen in research about TAs: being outgoing, possessing good communication skills, an ability to facilitate teamwork and the ability to see things from different perspectives. Clarke also noted when discussing 'precarious professionals' or unprofessional teachers, that there are professional values that might be attributed to a teacher: trust; honesty; commitment; respect; fairness; equality; integrity; tolerance and service (from the General Teaching Council in Northern Ireland, 2007, p. 2)' (Clarke, 2016, p. 31). As such, there appears to be a close alignment between the characteristics seen in both TAs and teachers, although notably absent is any focus on pedagogical skills.

'Role creep' - do TAs teach?

Along with this overlap of characteristics seen in teachers and TAs, I argue that differences in TA roles between and within schools are at the root of not only the challenge in presenting a set of nationally agreed standards for TAs or a uniform approach to training teachers to deploy TAs, but also begin to explain why the role of the TA can be excellent preparation for teaching. Research suggests that TAs work in a liminal space (Mansaray, 2006) in the school community but 'in relation to policy and institutional discourses, [TAs] are constructed as peripheral to teaching and learning', resulting in 'an ambiguous work identity' (Mansaray, 2006, p 174). This is particularly the case for the TAs in my study who are transitioning between the roles of TA and teacher. Ambiguity over the issue of 'role creep' (Blatchford et al., 2009) can be summarised as an overlap between the role of the TA and teacher and appeared in literature well before the DISS report; Quicke (2003) raised a question over whether teaching is in the remit of the TA. He queried:

> 'Rose (2000) [who] used phrases like 'oversee the work of small groups', 'supervisory role' and 'the provision of organisational guidance to individual pupils with special educational needs but also describes the LSA's [TA's] role as involving interventions to 'ensure understanding' and being trusted by teachers to 'make judgements about who needed help and what type'. These latter aspects of the role surely require a level of skill and reflection which are central to teaching?'

He went on to cite the HMI/Oftsted Report of 2003 which concludes that 'no one should pretend that teaching assistants are teachers' (para 65) but argued along with Ofsted (2003) that:

> ‘when they [TAs] are more successful they show many of the skills characteristic of good teachers: and understanding of children and their needs and behaviour, and the ability to interact effectively with them to promote learning; and the ability to assess where pupils are in their learning and what they need to do to make further progress’ (para 65).’

suggesting what is seen to be good practice for TAs are could also be seen to be the core skills of teaching.

Conversely, others suggest TAs do not, or should not teach. Quicke (2003) worried that TAs may start to be seen as ‘cheap teachers’ rather than assistants to the teacher who carry out administrative and other non-teaching tasks. Although Russell et al. (2005) found that ‘some headteachers and teachers acknowledge that TAs are ‘teaching’ pupils and that this is certainly the view of many TAs themselves’ (2005, p 187), others found that what TAs do is not quite teaching; Kerry (2005) argued that when a TA covers for teacher absence, or supervises pupils undertaking work set by a teacher, these are ‘ceilinged short of teaching’ because they involve TAs working mainly under supervision or guidance. This aligns with Russell et al. (2013) who considered PPA cover work to be supervision rather than teaching. Both Russell et al.’s (2005) and Kerry (2005) used quotation marks around ‘teach’ when writing about TAs teaching - presumably to imply that TAs are not really teaching. Russell et al. (2005) presented their view that teachers teach and TAs do not in a discussion about the boundary between ‘teaching [the remit of teachers] and non-teaching [the remit of TAs] roles’. Research by Wilson and Bedford (2008) supported the view that TAs do not teach; they found that teachers had responsibility for all children and did not want their position as teachers to be undermined, so TAs should not be expected to teach, and also that in fact TAs themselves did not want teaching responsibilities.

This ‘blurring’ of teacher/TA roles (Wren 2017) continues long after DISS. Butt (2016) presented a model for deployment and support that went some way to differentiate between the role of the TA and of the teacher, making it clear that the role of the TA was both to support the children, and to support the teacher (table 3 below). This study was based around supporting students in mainstream classes in Australia, and interestingly, the term used in the study is ‘Teach*er* Assistant’. Possibly this nomenclature in itself goes some

way to make the differences between TAs' and teachers' roles clearer than the arguably more ambiguous 'Teach*ing* Assistant' which carries an implication that teaching is part of the role, although an earlier Australian study by Fraser and Meadows (2008) uses 'Teach*ing* Assistant', suggesting this title is not necessarily universally used in Australia.

Roles in the TAAF model of deployment and support	
TAs	Teachers
Supervise learning for groups of students who can work relatively independently	Plan content of all lessons adopting UDL principles for all students
Support a teacher and a class, not specific students	Differentiate activities to cater for needs of all students
Answer questions from students as necessary	Provide additional instruction, modified instruction or reteach students experiencing difficulties
Keep students on task	Duty of care for all students
Collaborate with the teacher	Collaborate with the TA
Plan with the teacher	Plan with the TA
Assist with supportive behaviour management	Responsible for corrective behaviour management
Monitor student progress	Overall responsibility for student progress and achievement
Provide feedback to teacher on student progress	Supervise TA and provide feedback on TAs performance
Provide feedback to teacher on students to enable teacher to communicate student issues to families	Communicate with families
Assist with goal setting for Individual Learning Plans (if appropriate)	Assist TA with effective teaching strategies
Attend Individual Learning Plan meetings (if appropriate)	Prepare Individual Learning Plans for students
Attend training	Provide training for TA
Make mandatory reports to the teacher (if trained in mandatory reporting)	Make mandatory reports to school leaders

Table 3 – Roles in TAAF model of deployment and support from Butt, 2016, p 1002

As can be seen in Butt's model, collaboration is either explicit or implicit in most of the tasks shown above, but still does not go so far as to overtly cite 'teaching' within the remit of the teacher, and not the TA. Other studies however continue to present TA tasks which, when considering the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2013) are widely considered to be 'teaching', for example differentiating work (Wren, 2017), TAs planning what they are teaching to groups (Mansaray, 2006) and managing behaviour (Clarke, 2021).

2.2 Training to teach and teacher identity

2.2.1 Becoming a teacher

What teachers need to learn…what teachers need to be.

Despite extensive research in the field, there are many unanswered questions about the process of becoming a teacher (Caires, Almedia and Vierira, 2012). Caires et al. (2012) argued that this is because becoming a teacher requires intensive exploration of the self, others, beliefs, expectations and new experiences. As well as there being questions around the process of becoming a teacher, regardless of how teachers become teachers, others imply there are also unanswered questions about what might be deemed a 'typical trainee' (Burn, Hagger and Mutton, 2015). They presented four case studies from a three-year study of 24 teachers from the beginning of their training and on into their first two years of teaching. They warned that it is dangerous to think about a 'typical trainee':

> 'The differences between beginning teachers derive not just from their diverse prior experiences (within and beyond the world of education) and contrasting conceptions of effective learning within particular subjects, but also from their assorted assumptions about the learning process itself and the particular positions that they adopt in seeking to reconcile the dual role required of them as learner and teacher' (2015, p.15).

There are inherent tensions within this dual role which mean that learning to teach requires much more than 'just playing a role' (Danielewicz, 2001), and many of these tensions are related to the creation of and changes in a trainee teacher's professional identity.

Malderez, Hobson, Tracey and Kerr's 2007 paper discussed initial data gathered in their 'Becoming a Teacher' project; a 6-year study funded by the DfES, the GTCE and the TDA and aimed to investigate beginning teachers' experiences of initial teacher preparation. They recognised that teachers' prior experiences, and pre-conceptions and expectations about teaching shaped their experiences. Similarly to Danielewicz, Malderez et al., 2007 suggested that while some trainee teachers initially 'dressed for the part' and played a role as teacher, there was far more to teaching than this. They, along with Hobson, Malderez, Tracey and Giannakaki (2008) found that four core aspects represented the experience of becoming a trainee teacher: the concept of teacher identity; the importance of relationships; the relevance of aspects of their training; and the role of emotion when considering their early

experiences in schools (Malderez et al., 2007; Hobson et al., 2008). The themes of identity, the relevance of aspects of training, emotion and relationships will be discussed below, along with consideration of how prior experiences and preconceptions impact on becoming a teacher. How challenges are managed, both within identity formation and within practice is a theme that is also intertwined in this discussion.

Experiential learning and apprenticeship

Many researchers refer to Lortie's idea that uniquely within the field of professional training, trainee teachers have experienced a long 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975) having generally had more than ten years' experience observing in classrooms, making judgements about the quality of teachers and having experience of those teachers' teaching on their own learning (Burn et al., 2015, p.32). Whether this unavoidable prior knowledge is useful or counterproductive is questionable, but ideas about how teachers learn the knowledge and skills required to teach are important considerations when thinking about my participants' route into teaching.

Teacher Knowledge

According to Furlong and Maynard, 'Teachers' practical, professional knowledge can … be understood as relating to a number of professional 'domains' – knowledge of pupils, knowledge of strategies, knowledge of concepts and knowledge of context' (Furlong and Maynard, 1995, p. 169). Burn et al. (2015) suggested: knowledge of learners and learning; knowledge of subject matter and curriculum goals; and knowledge of teaching. Clarke (2016) alternatively proposed three essential elements to teacher learning: subject expertise; pedagogical content knowledge; and professional values. Richards (2018) on the other hand specified seven kinds of knowledge: subject-content knowledge; pedagogical subject knowledge; curriculum knowledge; general pedagogical knowledge; knowledge of educational contexts; knowledge of educational values as well as a need to know how to collect, analyse and use performance data.

Clarke (2016) acknowledged that work-based learning could be seen as a limited model for teachers; in practice, novice teachers may simply replicate the practices of more experienced others without opportunity for 'critical reflection, innovation and theoretical

conceptualisation' (2015, p. 12). However, Eraut's four modes of professional knowledge: replication; application; interpretation; and association support the argument for a balance between university- and work-based learning in teacher education. He suggested that the atheoretical 'replicative' mode of knowledge involves acquiring and replicating knowledge or practical skills; this could be seen as knowledge gained initially in university-based sessions. 'Application' of knowledge in school placements involves using knowledge in difference circumstances, but still working within rules or procedures. Eraut (1994) went on to argue that by applying theoretical knowledge to real life situations, a learner is engaging with the 'interpretive' mode of knowledge, and it is this mode of knowledge which requires interplay between theory and practice and 'plays some part in that mysterious quality we call 'professional judgement'…[which] involves practical wisdom…[and] a wealth of professional experience' (Eraut, 1994, p. 49). Eraut (1994) admitted that Broudy's 'associative' mode had been under-explored in the field of education but linked it again to using theory to solve problems and spark new ideas.

Eraut felt that in order to be a professional, various complex and hard to learn aspects of professional knowledge are required, including communication using specialised knowledge, learning to work in teams and organisations, and professional ethics (1994, p.46). In England, these are implicit in the Teaching Standards (DfE, 2013), and as supported by the ITT criteria (DfE, 2021), in order to achieve the necessary standards required for qualification to teach, there is a need to learn through experience supporting research that shows knowledge, theory and concepts related to teaching need to be developed through experience and applied in practice (Furlong and Maynard, 1995; Burn et al., 2015; Twiselton and Goepel, 2018).

Burn, Haggar and Mutton (2015) adapt their earlier work (with Brindley) and presented a table (table 4) to illustrate what they refer to as 'the different dimensions of learning from

Dimension	Orientation			
Aspiration The extent of the trainee's aspiration for their own and their pupils' learning	Satisfaction with current level of achievement	←	→	Aspirational both as learners and teachers
Intentionality The extent to which the trainee's learning is planned	Reactive	←	→	Deliberative
Frame of reference The value that the trainee ascribes to looking beyond their experience in order to make sense of it	Exclusive reliance on the experience of classroom teaching	←	→	Drawing on a range of sources to shape and make sense of experience
Response to feedback The trainee's disposition towards receiving feedback and the value that they attribute to it	Tendency to be disabled by critical feedback	←	→	Effective use of feedback to further learning
Attitude to context Attitude to the positions in which trainees find themselves and the approaches that they take to the school context	Tendency to regard the context as constraining	←	→	Acceptance of the context and ability to capitalise on it

experience'.

Table 4 – Dimensions of learning from experience from Burn et al., 2015, p 39

Burn et al. argued that 'aspiration' is a powerful determinant of trainee teachers' learning. They discussed one of their participants who had 'unfocused' idealism early on; her initial concerns revolved around the quality of her relationships with children, and another trainee focussed on how 'comfortable' he felt in the classroom. At the other end of the scale, their aspirational trainees pushed boundaries and were 'explicitly aware of the risks of complacency' and focussed on the importance of pupil learning (Burn et al., 2015, p, 41). Burn et al. also presented a trainee at the 'deliberative' or proactive end of the 'intentionality' continuum who had been disappointed to not receive regular mentor feedback; she wanted greater challenge in order to make progress in her learning. Burn et al. argued that: 'a deliberative approach involved [trainees themselves] not just identifying the next target for development, but mapping out specific steps by which to tackle it' (2015, p. 42). Burn et al. explained 'frame of reference' as 'the range of sources on which beginning teacher draw in making sense of their experience' (2015, p.42); at one end of the scale, limited reflective practice, and at the other, a critical evaluation from a range of perspectives. A significant difference was noted in Burn et al.'s participants' response to

feedback. They found that some trainees are 'disabled by any kind of criticism' and fail to see this as anything but a negative assessment of them as a person. Others were far more receptive, and even pushed for greater challenge in the targets discussed. However, Burn et al., also argued that 'self-deprecation…is not necessarily a good thing either' (2015, p. 45). Burn et al.'s final dimension of learning from experience is of particular relevance to my study. They suggest that there are implications for mentors when working with trainees from a broad range of routes into teaching; the 'scope for action and sense of status' (2015, p. 44) may differ for trainees who are treated as visitors who are offered limited opportunity to make their own decisions about routines and approaches, or for those who are given sole responsibility for the day to day running of the classroom. They argued that at one end of the scale, trainees may blame contextual factors such as the nature of the school or others (even pupils) they are working with for their lack of progress. Conversely, other trainees go beyond accepting the context in which they are learning and show a desire to learn from the particular features of a school or class (Burn et al., 2015).

Phases of becoming a teacher

In contrast to Burn et al.'s dimensions of learning to teach, others consider the teacher training journey as involving stages through which trainees pass and where pupil learning is the ultimate point at which at trainee 'becomes a teacher'. Malderez et al. (2007) summarised that there is much literature focusses on the idea that teacher training involves passing through a stage where the focus is on the trainee themselves before they focus on pupil learning. Taking on this full responsibility for teaching is seen in Vonk's (1989) 'threshold' phase of beginning teachers' professional development. Furlong and Maynard's (1995) work built on that of Fuller and Bown (1975) who suggested there were three phases of student teacher development; survival, mastery and a final stage during which teachers either have reached a point where they are settled and become resistant to change, or become responsive to feedback and pupils' needs. Clarke (2016), similarly to Furlong and Maynard (1995) suggest that initially, trainee teachers focus on their own performance during a lesson instead of on the children's learning or even their own future learning. Furlong and Maynard also considered the work of Calderhead (1987) whose three stages were: fitting in; passing the test; and exploring. Aspects of these ideas can be seen in Furlong and Maynard's (1995) model which categorised five broad stages of progress in a

trainee teacher's development: 'Early Idealism'; 'Personal survival'; 'Dealing with Difficulties'; 'Hitting a Plateau'; and 'Moving on'. This final stage is the point at which trainee teachers begin to respond to critical evaluation of pupils' needs, rather than focussing on being accepted as a teacher by others. They guarded against making an assumption that progress through these stages would necessarily be linear in every case.

Furlong and Maynard argued that 'student teachers often appear to begin their school experience with simplistic and idealistic understandings about, for example, their role as a teacher, the relationships they may have with the children in their class…and the nature of teaching and learning' (1995, p. 70-71). Furlong and Maynard felt that these preconceptions had a direct influence on student teachers' acceptance of what they deemed to be useful on their training course; aspects that did not align with their views of what it meant to be a teacher were judged to be irrelvant. In their first stage ('early idealism'), Furlong and Maynard discussed student teachers' simplistic preconceptions about pupil-teacher relationships; for example, students in their study initially wanted to be seen as 'warm, friendly, caring, enthusiastic and popular' (1995, p. 74) by their pupils. Despite their long 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975), Furlong and Maynard (1995) argued that student teachers do not 'observe' but rather think back to their own education and judge teacher personality rather than teacher effectiveness. This, Furlong and Maynard argued, means that mentors sometimes need to support student teachers in redefining their own view of teaching and learning as part of the training process. Stage 2 ('personal survival') of Furlong and Maynard's (1995) model sees student teachers experiencing reality in school placements; their idealism fades, and they enter a vulnerable stage where their focus is on their need to fit in and be seen as a teacher. They may try to copy what the teacher does with little understanding that different teachers have different personalities, want the children to like them, and face many challenges with classroom control. As student teachers enter Stage 3 ('dealing with difficulties') their focus moves 'from personal survival to their survival as a 'teacher' (or at least, their perception of what a teacher should be)' (Furlong and Maynard, 1995, p. 85). At this point, how other teachers view them, whether they are being seen to be 'a teacher' is very important, and their response to criticism is often taken very personally. As seen in Burn et al.'s (2015) model, they tend to blame other factors (for example a lack of resources) when things go wrong. At Stage 4 ('hitting a plateau') Furlong

and Maynard (1995) saw their student teachers gain confidence as they begun to see themselves as competent teachers but argued that their teaching remained ‘shallow’ as there was little understanding about the relationship between teaching and how children learn. It was only at stage 5 (‘moving on’) when student teachers begin to fully appreciate what it means to be a teacher; when they are forced to put aside their pre-conceptions about teaching and reflect on why teaching strategies or approaches are or are not working and accept responsibility for children’s progress. Those that Furlong and Maynard (1995) saw as struggling had very simplistic yet strong ideas about teaching and learning, while others took the opportunity to experiment. Being given a degree of control or greater autonomy seemed to be an important factor at this stage (Furlong and Maynard, 1995). Furlong and Maynard (1995) reiterated that these stages were not fixed, and progress through them was not linear; a change in context, or an unexpected challenge may ‘plunge’ student teachers back into personal survival mode. Similarly, progress may be impeded by lack of communication between a student teacher and their mentor, or an unwillingness on the mentor’s part to relinquish control of the class Furlong and Maynard (1995).

2.2.2 Teacher Identity

What is teacher identity?

Understanding about professional identity is important because it is seen to 'strongly determine how teachers teach, how they develop professionally and how they approach educational changes' (Shepens, Aelterman and Vlerick., 2009, p.363). Much literature considers the broader field of identity theory and social identity theory, however for the purposes of this literature review, I will focus on literature which specifically discusses teacher professional identity, a field that began to emerge between 1988 and 2000 (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004). As can be seen below in various literature, the term 'professional identity' is sometimes used as opposed to 'teacher identity' even by those writing in the field of teaching and teacher education. I have used the terms interchangeably depending on the term used by the researchers whose work I am discussing but favour the term 'teacher identity' to avoid delving too deeply here into concepts about what it means to be a professional. While there is now much written about this concept (e.g. Danielewicz, 2001; Beijaard et al., 2004; Day, Kington, Stobart and Sammons, 2005; Malderez et al., 2007), there appears to be no consensus or agreed definition that fully encompasses different researchers' ideas about the concept (Beijaard et al., 2004). However, there is a 'general acknowledgement of its significance' (Rodriques and Mogarro, 2019, p 695), it can be seen that ideas about teacher identity are inextricably linked with the process of becoming a teacher. I will begin by considering some of the varying definitions found in literature, and attempt to elicit a working definition for the purposes of my study.

Beijaard et al. (2004) found that professional identity was defined in literature in different ways, or not at all. They identified that many studies blurred what Beijaard et al. saw as personal practical knowledge and professional identity. Following a review of literature, they summarised that there are four features of professional identity; it is dynamic, it consists of sub-identities, it involves agency, and it implies person and context and can be defined 'in terms of the teacher's sense or perceptions of their roles or relevant features of their profession, or in terms of their perceptions of themselves as an occupational group' (Beijaard et al., 2004, 118). Danielewicz also focussed more on the role of others and being part of a group. She broadly defined identity as:

> ‘our understanding of who we are and of who we think other people are. Reciprocally, it also encompasses other people’s understanding of themselves and others (which included us). Theoretically, the concept of identity involves two notions: similarity and difference. So identities are the ways we relate to and distinguish individual (and groups) in their social relations with other individuals and groups’ (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 10).

Alternatively, Nickel and Zimmer adapted Bullough (1997)’s definition of professional identity and considered the impact of identity arguing that it is; ‘the beliefs teachers have about teaching and learning and how these beliefs shape the decisions they make’ (2019, p. 146). It is the narrative by which teachers explain their lives (Connolley and Clandinin, 1999; Sfard and Prusak, 2005) and it ‘helps us with setting goals and shows us the route to take’ (Rodriques and Mogarro, 2019, p. 694).

Ideas about identity are integral to Wenger’s views about identity within CoPs. Wenger (1998) suggested that identity construction involves experiencing three modes of belonging; engagement, imagination and alignment. ‘Engagement’ allows learners (in my study, trainee teachers) to negotiate meaning and participate in joint enterprise, aligning with Connolley and Clandinin’s (1999) and Sfard and Prusak’s (2005) ideas about identity enabling teachers to explain their lives. ‘Imagination’ allows individuals to create images of the world and imagine their place within it, which resonates with Rodriques and Mogarro’s (2019) view that identity guides an individual through their professional lives. ‘Alignment’ enables the identity of a larger group (for example teachers) to become part of an individual’s identity reflecting Beijaard et al.’s (2004) and Danielewicz’s (2001) focus on the link between professional identity and being part of a group.

Unstable, dynamic, ever changing

The complex concept of teacher identity is a focus of much investigation in the field of teacher education, and while I have shown that a clear definition of teacher identity is not easily agreed upon, there is a widespread agreement that it is multi-faceted and dynamic in nature (Beijaard et al., 2004; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009). It is recognised that changes in identity occur throughout a teachers’ career (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009, Trent, 2010; Nickel and Zimmer, 2019) and the idea that identity is unstable appears to be unchallenged

in literature (e.g. Dahl, 2020; Day et al., 2006; Beijaard et al., 1995, Danielewicz, 2001). Beijaard et al. summarised that: 'professional identity formation is, in our view, not only an answer to the question ''Who am I at this moment?''… but also an answer to the question: ''Who do I want to become?'' (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 122). As such, teacher identity requires constant reconstruction (Danielewicz, 2001), and this concept is highly relevant to the journey of TAs training to teach. Maclure agreed that identity 'should not be seen as stable…but as something that [people] use, to justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and to the contexts in which they operate' (1993, p. 312). Day and Kington (2008) also acknowledged that teacher identities are neither stable or unstable because they are influenced at different times by personal, professional and situated factors. Literature shows that teacher identity is not fixed (Rodrigues and Mogarro, 2019) because it is influenced by context (Findlay, 2006), motivation (Shepens et al, 2009) and prior experiences (Malderez et al, 2007). Shepens et al., (2009) suggested that student teachers' reinterpretation of their professional identity is also influenced by tacitly acquired understanding, their views of the broader teaching community, as well as personality and the influence of family members (Shepens et al., 2009). Rodrigues and Mogarro also recognised other factors that impact on student teacher identity construction 'cognitive knowledge, sense of agency, self-awareness, teacher voice, confidence and relationships' (2019, p. 707). They argued that these 'variables can be legitimately considered as the interrelated components of teacher identity' (Rodrigues and Mogarro, 2019, p. 707) and that when 'fluctuations' occur in any of these components, changes in teachers' identities will also occur (Rodrigues and Mogarro, 2019).

Adopting the role of a teacher

It is important to note after discussing the role of the teacher and the TA in depth in part one of this literature review that *identity* is not the same as *role*. O'Connor (2008) offered a distinction between role and identity, suggesting that *role* can be defined as the 'socially and culturally determined nature and commonly held expectation of an individual's professional self; but *identity* is the 'means by which individual reflexively and emotionally negotiate[s] their own subjectivity' (2008, p. 118). Although 'teaching demands nothing less than identity…this is more than just playing a role' (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 10), it is accepted that 'student teachers need to undergo a role-shift from being a non-teacher to being a

teacher' (Hobson et al., 2008, p. 415). As seen by Malderez et al. (2007), role shift results in trainee teachers being, unsurprisingly, preoccupied with the idea of teacher identity, although I would argue that this is often a subconscious process. Malderez et al. felt that their data suggested trainee teachers were either 'actualising an already identified potential' or undergoing a transformation of self in order to 'change into at teacher'. This may concur with Wenger's view that 'there must be more to school learning than learning school' (Wenger, 1998, p. 271). There is a perspective in literature that alludes to the aphorism 'fake it until you make it'; trainee teachers need to dress 'for the part' that they are playing – the role being 'teacher' (Malderez et al., 2007). Danielewicz may support this; she argued that 'to adopt any identity, individuals must be enable to act as if they are insiders' because 'identity arises from performing the role in a substantive and deep manner, for instance, when the experience of being a 'student teacher' is less like a student and more like a teacher' (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 118).

The challenges of teacher identity formation

Although teacher identity is recognised as a career long readjustment (Twiselton and Goepel, 2018), it is clear that the early stages of a teacher's career are particularly critical in the formation of identity (Nickel and Zimmer, 2019). Hobson et al., (2008) found that trainee teachers were preoccupied with the concept of 'being a teacher' and perhaps understandably, generally perceive their professional identity as relatively low (Beijaard, 2004). Hobson et al., (2008) found that identity was a core feature of the training experience and that trainee teachers views varied about whether they considered themselves to be teachers at the end of their training course. Some of their participants recognised that they may feel more like teachers once they had their own class or were more accountable for their own pupils' learning during the first year of their career. Hogden and Askew identify the challenges implicit in changes in identity; 'Professional change…involves at least in part becoming a 'different' teacher and a 'different' person. Becoming 'different' involves letting go of what one has been at the same time as maintaining the more fundamental aspects of one's identity' (2007, p. 475). Similarly, Androusou and Tsafos's (2018) found that changes in identity do not come easily; they argued that this is because changes to beliefs can be seen as a threat to the self. Rodrigues and Mogarro (2019) similarly argued that because literature rarely mentions the challenges

that occur in teacher identity formation, a perception that identity construction is 'simple and straightforward' is perpetuated, and this results in teacher educators and policy makers failing to effectively guide trainees through a process which is more complex than it may at first appear.

Multi-faceted / multiple dimensions / multiple identities

Changes in identity are challenging (Androusou and Tsafos, 2018; Rodrigues and Mogarro, 2019), perhaps because 'change' carries an implicit understanding that it involves a sense of 'leaving behind' or becoming something different (Hodgens and Askew, 2007). However, there are many that argue that multifaceted-ness is acknowledged feature of identity (e.g. Beijaard et al., 2004; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Dahl, 2020) which perhaps suggests that it is not necessary to leave anything behind when change occurs, but instead accept Wenger's view that identity should be viewed as a nexus of multi-membership (Wenger, 1998, p. 159). Conversely, rather than 'personal' and 'professional' for example being two separate identities, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) felt that both professional and personal aspects are encompassed within a person's professional identity. They argued that this 'unavoidable interrelationship' needs to be recognised to enable a balance between an individual's knowledge of themselves and of professional knowledge (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009, p. 178). The idea that individuals have more than one identity is supported by others (Schifter, 1996; Danielewicz, 2001; Beijaard et al., 2004). Danielewicz, similarly to Day and Kington (2008), highlighted the possibility of conflict between identities (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 3). Beijaard et al. (2004) specifically considered the conflicts that can occur for teachers when 'the 'personal' and the 'professional' are too far removed from each other' (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 109), suggesting that identity formation requires an ongoing process of integration between the personal and the professional due to the impact these tensions have on identity (Day et al., 2006).

Agency

An 'inextricable link' between 'identity' and 'agency' is also seen in research into teacher identity (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009, p. 183; Yuan and Lee, 2016). Danielewicz defines agency as:

> ‘the power or freedom or will to act, to make decisions, to exert pressure, to participate…or to be strategically silent. Although agency can’t be externally fixed or even identified, we can recognise it in ourselves. We experience agency as an internal, embodied feeling, a self-consciousness, or a will to act’ (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 163)

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) argued that as a teacher realises their identity, they gain a greater sense of agency or empowerment. Their view aligns with Day et al.’s (2006) who proposed that agency may be what allows unstable multiple identities to be maintained and tensions between them to be considered; ‘the agency that can be associated with the shaping of identity has a clear connection to the ways teachers are influenced by and interact within a variety of educational contexts’ (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009, p. 184). In a useful summary of the importance of the reciprocal link between agency and teacher identity development Danielewicz (2001) referred to a participant in her research whose self and subject knowledge combined to make her feel she was becoming a teacher; the more the participant identified herself as a teacher, the more power she had to act.

2.2.3 Relationships and social learning contexts

Dahl (2020) 'joined up the dots' between ideas about situated learning theory and identity development. She proposed that situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger 1991) may reveal how students' professional identity development takes place through subtle processes of enculturation in situated teacher education practices, and how identity processes are entangled in meaning-making and social practice (Wenger 2007)'. Lave and Wenger (1991; and Wenger, 1998) expounded legitimate peripheral participation as part of situated learning theory; Wenger (1998) argued that peripherality enabled a guided and gradual exposure to understanding what was required for teaching. This has been endorsed by others in the field of teacher education, for example Furlong and Maynard (1995) who felt that situated learning was a particularly relevant approach to teacher education due to its ability to combine peripherality and legitimacy (Wenger, 1998). Taylor (2014), researching the work-based learning of TAs on an Education Studies FdA programme suggested that because TAs were already seen by others to be fully integrated members of a school's CoP, there were challenges in applying Lave and Wenger's continuum model of novice to central participation to their learning within a CoP. In contrast to the TAs in my study though, Taylor's participants were seeking to legitimise their participation as TAs rather than become teachers; a continuum of peripherality is arguably more applicable when a different role in the community is being sought.

The social dimension of teacher training is at the heart of ITE (Caires et al.,2012). Day et al., argued that teacher identity is not just about gaining an understanding of the skills and knowledge required to teach, or even balancing the emotional and personal aspects of teaching, but is also a result of daily professional, cultural and social interactions and that the sense of community generated between a teacher and their pupils was pivotal to a sense of belonging (Day et al., 2006). Rodriques and Mogarro (2019) found that research about teacher identity formation in learning communities generally builds on Wenger's (1998) view that learning, in this case teacher learning, happens collaboratively within a learning community. All studies they considered agreed that an atmosphere of collaboration and reflection in learning communities had impact on professional development. Rodrigues and Mogarro (2019) found that relationships play an important contribution to student

teachers' development of their attitudes about teaching, and the construction of their identities.

The beginnings of an individual's teacher identity are built on the support received from colleagues (Caires et al., 2012). Unsurprisingly, in schools where teachers feel leaders support and encourage them, and in which effective working relationships are formed, teachers have more positive attitudes towards teaching (Flores and Day 2006). Malderez et al. (2007) also argued that trainees' competence was improved when they felt part of a team, had good relationships with pupils and colleagues and this led to better teacher retention. Professional identity is influenced by other people's expectations because it is 'formed through interaction with others and with the environment' (Shepens et al., 2009, p. 363). Furlong and Maynard, 1995 also considered pupils' perceptions of student teacher to be important, despite the challenges faced in achieving and maintaining professional relationship with pupils. One of the participants in Malderez et al.'s (2007) study was a TA who became a teacher. She initially was worried that having been a TA, children would not respond to her in the way that they responded to the teacher. Fortunately, these concerns proved to be unfounded, but it is widely recognised that 'a large contributing factor to trainees' developing sense of being a teacher is the extent to which others treat them as such' (Hobson et al., 2008, p 424). Others also impact on self-esteem through a process in which individuals reflect on whether they are 'in-group' or behaving in the same way as others in the group to which they are comparing themselves (Stets and Burke, 2000). In *Teaching Selves*, Danielewicz made links between other people and an individual's identity; she asserted that identities are formed though convergence between people, things, language and actions, they are 'fluid compositions' arising from interactions between the self and others and are produced through participation in discourse which impacts on the development of identity (Danielewicz, 2001). If identity is 'being recognised as a certain kind of person' by others (Gee, 2000, p. 99), both how an individual is seen to be becoming a teacher, and their relationships with those that support and assess that process is clearly of central importance and can have a lasting impact on a student teachers' views about their teacher identity, and the profession.

However, there is a sense of vulnerability when others are inevitably involved in a teacher identity formation. How others see a student teacher is linked to performance; 'for any teacher new to a class or context, an initial concern is with acceptance by the community in the role, and a focus is therefore on themselves (their identity and performance as a teacher)' (Malderez et al., 2007, p. 242). This need to perform as a teacher or 'wanting to demonstrate their credibility can therefore make some trainees very reluctant to engage in activities which mark them out as novices' (Burn et al., 2015, p 29). As a result, student teachers may adopt what Flores and Day (2006) refer to as a 'strategic compliance' approach; they follow what is expected by their mentors and keeping their own reservations to themselves, resulting in changes to teacher identity.

Relationships with all members of the community are crucial to student teacher development (Hobson et al., 2008) and the learning process, but the student teachers' relationships with their mentor is perhaps the most important (Caires et al., 2012). Student teachers not only compare themselves with those 'in-group' (Stets and Burke, 2000) with the mentor usually being the most available role model, but also seek external validation of their performance and the approval of mentors confirm and establish a person's professional identity (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 52-3). While my study is not focussed meeting qualifying standards, not only is qualification required for many teaching posts, but more than that, 'qualification is in every sense a *rite de passage*, which affects people's status in society, a landmark in the process of professional socialisation' (Eraut, 1994, p. 159). This aligns with Wenger's view that achieving a qualification is a marker of transition and is a substantial aspect of identity (Wenger, 1998) as such, this aspect of the mentoring role cannot be ignored by mentees. Caires et al.'s (2012) study found that the supervisor or mentor was the 'key facilitator' in student teachers' progress not only in providing technical and emotional support, but also in enabling a shared exploration of beliefs and joint construction of meanings which result in significant opportunities to understand what it means to be a teacher and to enhance relationships. Burn et al., (2015) also saw student teachers' relationships with their mentors as extremely important but complicated due to the duality of the role mentors fulfil as both provider of advice and support, and assessor. The mentoring relationship has been often written about in literature, and it is widely recognised that effective mentoring requires considerable preparation to ensure

appropriate support and understanding of consistent opportunities for trainees' development (Malderez et al., 2007). There is limited scope to discuss this theme fully in this literature review, however, it is clear that 'proto-professionals' or trainee teachers should have access to significant professional support and mentoring (Clarke, 2016) and that 'mentoring [should involve] a structured, sustained partnership between a teacher and their mentee' (Clarke, 2016, p. 11). Student teachers who identify with their mentors or see themselves as 'being on the same page' become more self-assured in their progress towards becoming a teacher (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 49), aligning with Stets and Burke's (2000) 'in group' idea. Many respondents in Malderez et al.'s (2007) research project spoke about positive relationships with their mentors early on in their training; they boosted their confidence, gave them advice and strategies for classroom management, managing time and workload, and were there for support. Others suggested that mentors who were 'too busy' or did not let the trainee take responsibility for the class resulted in negative mentor-mentee relationships. Nearly half of Malderez et al.'s participants were keen to become 'part of the school community' but that some schools were unwelcoming. Danielewicz (2001, p. 120) concurred with the idea that mentors can have both a positive and a negative impact on identity.

One aspect of the mentor-mentee relationship that based on experience seems to be important to becoming a teacher, is the degree to which mentors 'trust' their trainees. Twiselton and Goepel argued that 'an important element of being able to be full professional is concerned with having the authority to decide how to carry out practice, to be autonomous' (Twiselton and Goepel, 2018, p. 18). This was acknowledged by student teachers in Hobson et al.'s (2008) study who felt their progress was based on the degree of autonomy they had on school placements or whether they were trusted to make decisions. Hobson et al. (2008) argued that this links to the work of Lave and Wenger (1991); varying degrees of 'legitimate peripheral participation' were offered to Hobson et al.'s participants during placements and sometimes trainees did not have opportunity to engage fully in the CoP in their placement schools. This led to them not yet considering themselves to be teachers. Others also support this view that professional identity is determined by teachers' perception of autonomy (Siraj-Blatchford, 1993).

2.2.4 Prior experience

Overall literature acknowledges the importance of prior experience and gives different reasons for this; Eraut argued that in order to acquire information, 'an existing knowledge-base in the area concerned' is required' (Eraut, 1994, p. 108). Androusou and Tsafos supported this idea and went further:

> 'All teachers [in their] sample…attribute great importance to the role of experience, as it allows them to: (a) make up for any deficiencies in their education, (b) deal with a difficult situation or a crisis, (c) avoid making mistakes, and control their group more efficiently, and (d) operate more autonomously and effectively' (2018, p. 564)

Burn et al. support Eraut's (1994) view explaining that 'experience is vital, since it is in the processes of planning, teaching and evaluation that all the other sources of knowledge on which beginning teacher might draw come together in action and acquire meaning' (2015, p. 38).

Research shows that there are tensions between what society expects from teachers, and teachers' own experience of teaching (Shepens et al., 2009). Shepens et al., (2009) and Surgue (1997) both refer to the influence of tacitly acquired understanding as an influential factor on student teachers' identity creation; this is often seen to be obtained through the 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975). This idea refers to student teachers' observation of teachers when they were pupils themselves, but little is written about this from the perspective of TAs developing understanding about teaching through observation of the teachers with whom they work. More specifically, there is very little written about TAs becoming teachers, but some authors who do touch on this route into teaching frame it quite negatively; Burn et al., suggested that some trainee teachers 'test their resolve by first working as teaching assistants' (2015, p. 33), and Glazzard argued that 'those [trainee teachers] who have worked in education previously in roles such as teaching assistants may find aspects of professionalism challenging (2016, p. 306). However, given that the ideas a student teacher has about professional community influences their professional identity (Goodson and Cole, 1994; Shepens et al. 2009), and that TAs do train to teach (Skipp and Hopwood, 2019), being a TA cannot be seen as a wholly negative 'apprenticeship of observation'. Student teachers sometimes choose to train to teach because they identify with a particular role model from their past (Danielewicz, 2001), and in the case of TAs, this

may be a teacher with whom they work. It is likely that teachers in TAs' schools influence their teacher identity formation given that Flores and Day (2006) suggested that positive and negative prior experiences of teaching styles are highly influential on the shaping of teacher identities; they found that former teachers were seen by participants in their study to be a 'frame of reference' in making sense of teaching during training. Androusou and Tsafos (2018) also suggested prior experience was one of the essential influences on teacher identity; 'it is argued that teachers' attitudes, values and beliefs originate from their life experiences, particularly the way teachers remember and interpret these experiences' (p. 566).

Preconceptions were also considered with others suggesting that the ideas a student teacher has about professional community influence their professional identity (Goodson and Cole, 1994; Shepens et al. 2009). Sugrue (1997) found that student teachers' preconceptions about teaching and initial identity formation began with the student teachers' personalities, and were influenced by their immediate family, significant others or extended family, with these factors continuing to influence later reinterpretation of professional identity.

Androusou and Tsafos (2018) argued that professional experience was more important than understanding the construction of teacher identity. They found that 'despite the efforts' of university-based teacher educators to facilitate Greek trainee pre-school teachers to reconsider their lay theories about teaching, the trainee teachers' core beliefs remained broadly as they were. This perhaps aligns with the work of Shepens et al., (2009) whose study considered teacher identity formation alongside the idea in layman's terms that teachers are either be 'born to teach' (so always had the personality traits seen in teachers) or become teachers based on their experience. They argued that the best predictor of self-efficacy, teaching commitment and professional orientation were personality traits and the original motivation student teachers had to start a teacher training programme in the first place.

Calderhead however warned of the negative influence of prior experience, finding that:

> ‘research…on student teachers tends to suggest that their teaching relies heavily on the images of practice that are acquired from past and current experiences in schools. These images can be taken and implemented uncritically…leading in some cases to opinionated or self-defensive approaches to professional learning. As a result, student teachers’ learning could quite quickly reach a plateau where teaching has become routine, conservative and unproblematic’ (1988, p. 62).

This is of particular importance when considering TAs training to teach as their observation of other teachers will have seen them ‘getting by’, perhaps using a limited range of teaching approaches, and arguably may not have facilitated TAs’ understanding of the theoretical underpinning behind the choices that teachers make, leaving the possibility of ‘plateauing’.

Practical elements of preparing for a school placement are also of relevance and link to the prior knowledge held by TAs. Burn et al. (2015) noted that the first visit to a placement school, and early induction to the school will involve things like introduction to staff members, policies and processes, the geography of the school and IT systems (Burn et al., 2015). Twiselton and Goepel (2018) presented a case student of one student teacher who expressed her feeling of ‘belonging’ in a school; she had started her training earlier than her peers which she felt gave her an advantage; she already knew about rules and routines. One of the aspects that is seen widely by teacher educators is a worry amongst trainee teachers about behaviour management (Clarke and McNichol, 2020). Beginning teachers often report that behaviour management is a challenge often faced in new contexts (Flores and Day, 2006) but the prior experience of TAs who have a key role in managing behaviour (Clarke, 2021) arguably equip them with another ‘head start’.

2.2.5 The emotional impact of teacher training

The 'messiness' of student teacher learning during placements is recognised as having 'emotional ups and downs which may have a direct bearing on [student teacher's] professional identity' and what they bring to their future career' (Yuan and Lee, 2016, p. 820). Burn et al. (2015), held a similar view; that the emotional response to the training journey influences trainees' development, and these emotional responses are linked to dimensions of learning from experience. Others (Malderez et al., 2007 and Hobson et al., 2008) suggest that training providers should provide more effective support for the 'inevitably emotionally charged process of becoming a teacher' (Hobson et al., 2008, p 427). Unsurprisingly, negative emotions can have a detrimental effect on teacher identity development, whereas positive emotions contribute to a sense of teacher identity (Yuan and Lee, 2016), with aspects such as relationships with children having a positive impact, and lack of trust or support from mentors being presented an impediment to identity development (Meyer, 2009).

Zemblyas (2005) felt that teacher identity formation is fundamentally linked with emotion, with emotions not only being a defining factor in identity development, but also in shaping future decisions, or as Yuan and Lee (2016) suggest, enabling or disabling agency. As explained by Flores and Day (2006) and Day et al. (2006), emotion is a significant part of teacher identity because teaching requires emotional investment there is the danger that teachers experience vulnerability when confronting situations which challenge their beliefs and practices (Day and Kington, 2008; Beijaard et al., 2004). Reinforcing the importance of relationships, Malderez et al. felt that 'certain relationships, particularly with mentors…allowed [trainee teachers] to deal with the emotional vulnerability that becoming a teacher involves' (2007, p. 237).

What might prompt an emotional response?

It is accepted that there will be fluctuations in the emotional journey of training teachers; Warwick and Wolpert (2018) recognised that 'the learning journey of a trainee teachers is not a linear, predictable or straightforward process, so it is inevitable that some points during the year will be more challenging than others' (2018, p. 42). Challenging situations (Day and Kington, 2008; Beijaard et al., 2004) need to be tackled because it is important to

acknowledge that the stability (or not) of a teacher's professional identity has an impact on teacher resilience and commitment to teaching during future working lives (Day and Kington, 2008). Day and Kington found that both internal and external events, as summarised below in table 5 impact on teacher identity construction, putting individuals in an emotionally vulnerable position.

	Positive	Negative
Professional	Promotion/additional role Continued professional development Department/school support Motivated colleagues/pupils	Policy changes (both internal to the school or externally imposed) Workload Unsuccessful promotion/tension between roles
Situated	Supportive leadership Supportive colleagues Teamwork Pupil relationships Pupil behaviour	Pupil behaviour (challenging/lack of respect) Unsupportive or new leadership from senior management team Inadequate discipline procedures Lack of parental support Lack of teamwork Drop in school roll Building work Lack of enthusiasm/disaffected attitude
Personal	Family/friend support Few home commitments Life events (relationships/health)	Personal/family illness Bereavement Financial worries Lack of family support Relationships issues

Figure 5, Key features that impact on the stability of teachers' identities. Summarised from Day and Kington, 2008, p. 14, 15, 16 and 19.

Glazzard (2016 p. 301-11) highlighted similar 'stressful situations' that teachers face: challenging behaviour; parental complaints about teaching; heavy workload; being undermined or challenged by other members of staff; receiving negative feedback; being observed in unsuccessful lessons; having to adapt to new policies or practices; and not feeling valued in the workplace. His solution for trainee teachers was the need to develop resilience but recognised that this takes time and experience (Glazzard, 2016, p. 311). Hobson et al. (2008) found that a 'whole range of positive, negative and mixed emotions' (2018, p. 412) impacted on student teachers' training; their participants noted negative emotions related to a perceived lack of support from mentors, the assessment of their

teaching, feedback generally, workload and work-life balance and their own sense of their efficacy as teachers. Positive emotions were also noted in some of these situations, reinforcing the importance of relationships in teacher identity formation; trainees that felt they had supportive and helpful mentors saw as directly influencing the success of their training. The negotiation of meaning as a result of challenging dilemmas constitutes what Dahl (2020) referred to as 'turning points' in professional identity formation. In her narrative inquiry research about Danish and Kenyan student teachers' identity, she presented the idea that certain events are important in narrative recounts as they illustrate a situation which may result in a reassessment of practices and beliefs and may lead to change. She found that 'moments of epiphany' during teacher training when solving dilemmas meant that new meaning was found and resulted in a movement in identity and also required renegotiation of past expectations about teaching. Furlong and Maynard also argued that the process of discovering 'me-as-a-teacher' was 'slow and painful' (1995, p. 109); with student teachers facing frustration when they fail to meet their own expectations about what it means to be a teacher, anger at pupils when they have to let go of their 'ideal' teacher self-image and challenges in learning to bring their own personality into their teaching role (Furlong and Maynard, 1995, p. 109-111).

2.2.6 Teacher training programmes

I argue that 'becoming a teacher' involves two dimensions. There is a need to meet the required standards and qualify; Eraut wrote that 'all professions should have public statement about what their qualified members are competent to do, and what people can reasonably expect from them. These should comprise both minimum occupational standards and codes of professional conduct' (Eraut, 1994, p. 211). However, the second and in my view most important dimension is that of adopting a teacher identity; because as above, this is the process by which student teachers learn to be a teacher, make sense of the experience of teaching (Sachs, 2005), learn to cope with competing perspectives (Beijaard et al, 1995) and find their place in the community of teachers (Dahl 2020). It is not enough to just 'know' about teaching; there is a need to help individuals 'become' good teachers who can understanding themselves as teachers' (Shepens et al., 2009).

A variety of training routes in the UK allow student teachers to gain QTS; Whiting, Whitty, Menter, Black, Hordern, Parfitt, Reynolds and Sorensen, 2018) reviewed the QTS routes available during the academic year 2015-16 and discussed the many routes available at the time (eight broad routes, but with subcategories within some of these). They suggested that in England, the process of reform in teacher education had been more dramatic and prolonged than in other countries and has resulted in a fragmented and complex diversity of routes into teaching. This confusion is arguably due to successive governments having differing priorities and failing to base far reaching changes on evidence. The incoming Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010 appeared to ignore Ofsted's judgement at the time that more HEI led provision than school-based provision was deemed to be outstanding (Whiting et al., 2018), and under the leadership of Michael Gove (Secretary of State for Education) () proposed greater emphasis on school-based teacher training routes. Around the same time, Sir Andrew Carter carried out a review into initial teacher training. Despite the fact that Carter found that 'it is very difficult to draw conclusions about whether one route into teaching is any more effective than another' (2015, p. 47), his theoretically independent review for DfE appeared to conform with Gove's view and favour post-graduate school-led training routes such as School Based Initial Teacher Training (SCITTs) and School Direct (SD), despite the fact that 'Ofsted judge the university provision to be the best' (Carter, 2015, p. 47). Instead, his preference for school-

led provision on arguably biased sources; an Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) study which found schools were more likely to see school-based routes as financially beneficial, and results of the 2014 newly qualified teacher (NQT) survey in which NQTs who had trained on SCITT routes were found to be more likely to say their training had been good or very good. However, Carter did suggest there were strengths in all routes: the length of undergraduate routes was seen to enable extended and gradual development of skills and knowledge; NQTs and schools valued school-led routes; those on school-based routes had higher take-up of teaching posts; and although at the time in the early stages so without evidence to support the assertion, Carter suggested SD routes could provide access to excellent school experiences. Interestingly Carter did acknowledge that SD programmes provide a narrower range of school experiences contradicting research which showed that there was a need for trainee teachers to experience a wide range of schools during their training (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Clarke, 2016). Following a cabinet reshuffle and changes in both education secretary and party leadership between 2014 and 2016, and in response to a crisis in teacher retention which Whiting et al. (2018) argued was due to the fragmentation of the system, Whiting et al. (2018) presented data to show an ongoing pattern of a decline in numbers on HE provider routes and an increase in SD routes between 2011 and 2016 based on census data published at the time by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL), but arguing that more recent census data hinted at 'a reduced emphasis on the much vaunted 'school-led' routes' (2018, p. 69). This can also be seen more recently; the DfE's census data for new entrants to ITT routes in 2020/21 shows an increase from 2019/2020 in those training with an HEI in both post-graduate and undergraduate routes, while numbers in SD (non-salaried) and SCITT routes remaining the same. A very slight reduction in SD (salaried) and Teach First routes is also seen (DfE, 2020). A 23% increase in new entrants to ITT is presented by the DfE as the headline data with a lack of specific detail in statistics about routes taken, suggesting a change in the government's emphasis on which route student teachers choose. While the current government celebrate the increase in student teacher numbers, it is important to note the impact of the Covid-19 recession has to an overall surge in ITT applications (Worth and MacLean, 2020) during 2019/2020 so an increase in enrolments in September 2020 is unsurprising but also that data for 2020 enrolments should be considered to be potentially anomalous.

There is much debate in literature about the balance between partners in teacher education programmes. Eraut argued that 'higher education institutes and professional communities need to establish closer relations and to assume joint responsibility for knowledge creation, development and dissemination' (1994, p. 57). The diversification of the routes available for trainee teachers (Hobson et al., 2008) has arguably led to variety in training. Over recent years there has been a shift towards a greater proportion of training, even on university-led programmes, being based in school (Hobson et al., 2008). Furlong (2019) summarised that the value of universities in the process of teacher education in England particularly has long been suffering a 'discourse of derision' leading to universities' place in teacher education being seen as having less and less importance. Clarke (2016) warned against links to HEIs being abandoned, stating that intellectual rigour would be limited in cases where a mentor lacked this characteristic, and while local expertise maybe excellent in school-based training, understanding of the global context which is available where links to a university are maintained ensures trainees and indeed teachers 'do not ossify within the limited geographical imaginations and closed horizons of formulaic accountability' (Clarke, 2016, p. 12). She went on to discuss another position in her Place Model – that of the 'de-professionalised' teacher and explicitly asked 'How might a student teacher best defend themselves from [the] staffroom cynics…[who] may leave generations of damaged…student teachers in their wake' (2016, p. 34-35) presenting another justification of university-based training. Arguing that fragmentation between universities and schools was beneficial for trainee teachers, Grenfell (1996) suggested this was because contradictory positions about aspects of teaching were being presented to them.

Regardless of the route taken, it is recognised that the design of teacher education programmes needs to allow for training to take place in authentic contexts (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 182). Training in the UK takes place in a range of contexts to ensure a range of learning about different contexts can occur (Twiselton and Goepel, 2018). This is important when it is seen that teachers' identities are vulnerable to policy external and internal policy changes (O'Connor, 2008; Day et al., 2006), and past and present personal experiences Day et al. (2006). Enabling exposure to a wide range of different school placements to allow student teachers opportunity to be exposed to tensions that challenge their identities (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009) and result in 'turning points' identity development (Dahl,

2020). Rodriques and Mogarro (2019) argued that it is important for teacher educators to understand the formation of teacher identity in order to design teacher training programmes which support trainees in constructing their professional identity however, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) argued that consideration of teacher identity formation is not always explicit in teacher education programmes. Training placements are a way of situating learning and 'gaining identity through membership of different social practices and communities' (Dahl, 2020, p. 135). Eraut also argued for breadth of experience: 'students should acquire a broader vision, view issues from several perspectives, see many alternative courses of action, expect to handle multiple interpretations' (Eraut, 1994, p. 34). As such, placements are seen to heavily influence identity formation (Nickel and Zimmer, 2019) and the influence of the schools is seen to be an important contributor to early teacher success (Flores and Day, 2006). They provide not only a context in which student teachers can place their learning but influence their future careers and the type of teachers they will become (Yuan and Lee, 2016; Flores and Day, 2006). Teaching placements are designed to 'help a student cross over the border….and join the collectively of teachers' (Danielewicz 2001, p. 113), and also give student teachers the chance to move from 'ideal self' to 'actual self' by allowing them opportunities to reflect on their experiences with mentors which results in growth in self-efficacy (Nickel and Zimmer, 2019). Rodrigues and Mogarro (2019) suggested that changes in student teachers' identities were noticed when in university as opposed to during school placements, but this contradicts a widely held belief that learning on placement is pivotal to teacher identity formation (Nickel and Zimmer, 2019; Dahl; 2020).

Interestingly, and of importance to the design of ITE programmes, Hobson et al. (2008) found that when trainees had had prior experience in schools, they were able to appreciate the links between theory and practice better. This perhaps implies that in all training routes, there is a need to ensure trainees have experience in school before they are introduced to theoretical ideas. Aligning with the idea that a ''one size' of ITP [ITT] does not 'fit all'' (Hobson et al., 2008, p. 423) and that trainees' prior experiences and pre-conceptions playing an important part in identity formation in teacher training' (Flores and Day, 2006; Androusou and Tsafos, 2018. Eraut suggested that people 'pick up' ideas in different ways, meaning that trainee teachers 'already possess a considerable quantity of theory before they even begin their courses' (Eraut, 1994, p. 60). For participants in my study, arguably

they have been exposed, perhaps unconsciously to very relevant theory in practice while working with qualified teachers.

2.2.7 Conceptual Framework

Key concepts within Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practice will provide a lens through which I can consider TAs' learning about teaching within a social setting, the relationships they build through mutual engagement within a school community and the impact their prior experience – the joint enterprise and shared repertoire of a school has on changes in their professional identity. Here, I will briefly consider how Wenger's ideas relate to my research focus, specifically:

- what membership of a CoP means and how TAs are already members of a CoP
- social learning within a school CoP including the relationships with and the influence of others within the community
- legitimate peripheral participation in relation to the learning trajectory TAs training to teach
- and identity formation as part of a nexus of multi-membership

Membership of a CoP

The role of the TA is not clear in literature, and not the same in individual schools. Studies that focus on outcomes of pupil progress fail to acknowledge the 'other' things that TAs do, but TAs are seen by others to be pivotal to what goes on in schools; they already members of their home school community of practice.

Wenger wrote that the practices that developed through collective learning belong to those engaged in the 'pursuit of a shared enterprise' (1998, p. 45). As such, schools can be seen to be 'CoPs' not simply because the school might be defined as, or even call itself, a community, but because the individuals within the school are working towards a shared goal – that of teaching learners. Wenger explained the idea of 'working towards a shared goal' further; 'joint enterprise', 'mutual engagement' and 'shared repertoire' characterise practice which is the source of coherence within a community (Wenger, 1998, p. 73) (see figure 6). Through my data collection, it was these elements that I sought to uncover to help me understand my participants' place within their schools and how their membership of these communities impacted on the development of their teacher identities.

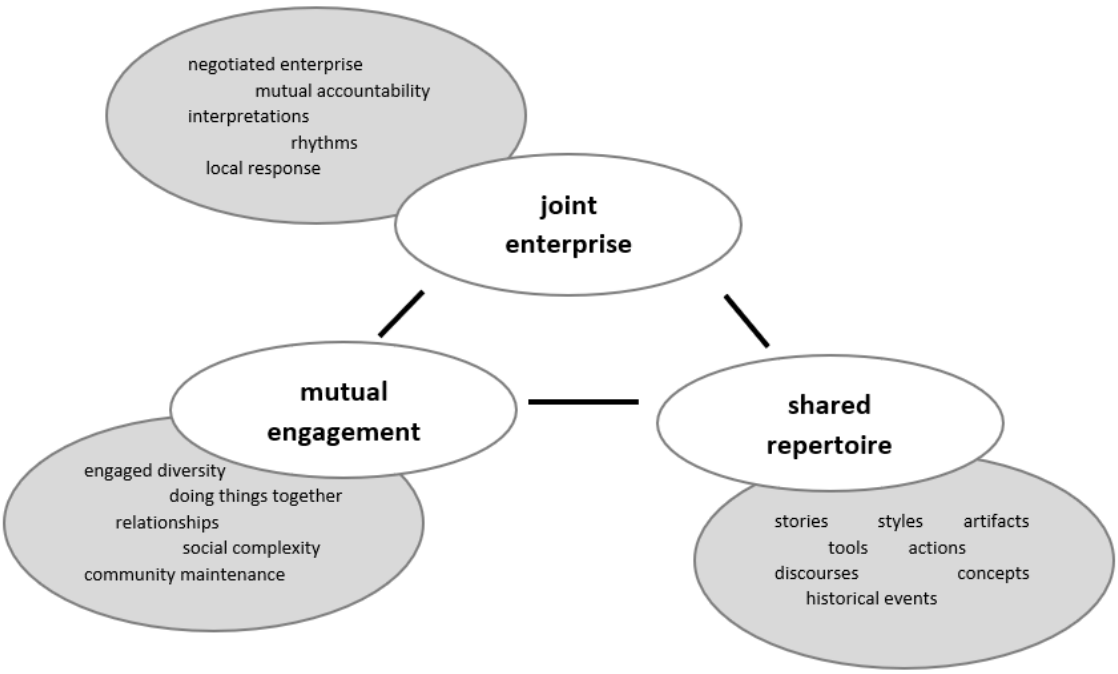

Figure 1 'Dimensions of practice as the property of a community' from Wenger, 1998, p. 73

Being part of a new community…or communities

Using CoPs as a lens, teacher training might also be considered to involve trainees seeking to join a new community (Wenger, 1998); that of the qualified teacher. In working with students on this particular training route over the past ten years, it has become apparent that the influence of one school's CoP may have a greater impact on the formation of the new teacher than might be experienced by trainees on other training routes that do not require any 'attachment' (whether formally or informally) to one school. Trainees on this route often find placements in schools other than their 'home' school to be particularly challenging, citing problems with building relationships or understanding the structures, approaches and practices within another school. My thoughts before undertaking the research were that prior experience as a TA may allow this group of trainee teachers to have greater insight into the challenges they will face in teaching, however it could be argued that they only have insight into the challenges that they may face in *one* school, which may share few similarities with another school. Using CoPs as a lens with which to understand this allowed me to consider what joint enterprise, shared repertoire and mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998, p.73) looked like in different schools from the perspective of

the trainee, and whether the position of the trainee within at least two different school communities had an impact on them as they became teachers. Where they were arguably more embedded as a central member of their 'home' school's community, I was interested to consider whether this group of trainees were already mutually engaged in that community, understood the joint enterprise of that school and shared a repertoire with others within the school, therefore allowing an 'easier' transition between TA and teacher. I was also interested to consider if this 'elevated' starting point *only* supported the TA in becoming a teacher in just one school or whether it had any impact on their becoming part of the wider community of teachers.

Social learning within a CoP

Wenger pointed out that working with other people facilitates an exchange of information and opinions which 'very directly influence[s] each others' understanding' (Wenger, 1998, p. 75). It is recognised that TAs learn their role 'on the job' and learning to teach requires a similar 'on the job' approach during 'real-life' school placements. Learning within a social school environment relies on mutual relationships with others to enable development of understanding about teaching, but also enables trainee teachers to access individualised support from mentors and others in the school. The context in which trainees on this route into teaching learn the 'craft knowledge' of teaching (Grimmett and MacKinnon, 1992) relies heavily on the support of the social constructivist theory of 'more knowledgeable others' Lev Vygotsky (1987), in this case school- and university-based mentors. Wenger explained that:

> 'theories of social practice address the production and reproduction of specific ways of engaging with the world. [In] everyday activity and real-life settings [there is] and emphasis on the social systems of shared resources by which groups organise and coordinate their activities, mutual relationships and interpretations of the world' (1998, p. 13).

Legitimate peripheral participation

I was interested to discover whether in becoming a teacher, my participants found they were becoming part of a different community within their school, or finding a different

place within pre-existing community of which they were already a member. Lave and Wenger's (1991) work on legitimate peripheral participation focusses on the process by which newcomers become a part of a community of practice, and while TAs becoming teachers are not technically 'newcomers', Lave and Wenger (1991) suggested that legitimate peripheral participation helps explain the activities, identities, artifacts and communities of knowledge and practice and includes the learning of knowledgeable skills. As such, it may help explain the knowledge that TAs already hold about a schools' CoP and the wider constellations of practice relating to education, being a TA and being a teacher.

It is also seen in literature that TAs work on a 'blurred' continuum which might be seen as a scale from non-teacher to teacher depending on their integration within their role, their relationship with the teachers with whom they work, and how much 'teaching' they do within their role. Lave and Wenger's (1991) idea that situated learning can be seen as a 'transitory concept, a bridge' seems to align with the idea that TAs are on a learning trajectory during their time as a TAs but also as they transition to become teachers. The liminal space occupied by TAs (Mansaray, 2006) suggests that TAs are in effect 'peripheral teachers' given that what they do in practice shows that they have similar knowledge and skills to those of the teacher. This may help explain their learning trajectory.

Although Lave and Wenger (1991) saw peripherality as an empowering position, TAs may characterise their peripheral role in a less positive light defining it more as a marginalised position. At some point in, or on completion of their training, student teachers begin to define themselves as teachers through practices they engage in, but also by what they do not do. As such, understanding where a trainee placed themselves within their school, and possibly within different communities within the school at the outset was important to my research; Wenger argued that members of a community 'know who they are by what is familiar and by what [they] can negotiate and make use of, and that [they] know who [they] are not by what is unfamiliar, unwieldy, and out of [their] purview' (Wenger, 1998, p. 164). There is also the need to consider whether my participants faced challenges in crossing community boundaries; Wenger suggested boundary crossing was difficult where becoming a member of one community requires being outside another community (1998, p. 168).

Identity formation

I deliberately avoided focussing on what this group of trainee teachers learnt in terms of specific skills of teaching, or the subject knowledge required to teach, but aimed instead to understand how and when they began to see themselves as a teacher. In my research, I was keen to understand what happened when my participants felt they had learnt to be teachers, rather than still seeing themselves as a TA or a trainee teacher – the point at which they were doing and experiencing what other teachers do. I argue that this differs from the more technical point at which they qualify. Furthermore, from a postmodern perspective, 'with its interest in the individual and acknowledgement of the influence of experience and culture on the construction of knowledge' (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 4), it is unreasonable to suggest that 'becoming a teacher' is something that might be achieved within a prescribed timescale (in this case 16 months) regardless of experience gained prior to training and the variety of experiences encountered on the course. As can be seen above, identity, in this case teacher identity is not something that should be seen to ever be 'achieved'; Wenger emphasised that identity was not a fixed destination – he felt that identities are trajectories that 'incorporate the past and the future in the very process of negotiating the present' (Wenger, 1998, p. 155) aligning with the idea that identity is ever changing (e.g. Beijaard et al., 1995, Danielewicz, 2001; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009).

A significant proportion of Wenger's work focussed on identity and the 'dual relationship between practice and identity' (Wenger, 1998, p. 17). Specifically, he considered identity to encompass negotiated experience, community membership, learning trajectory, a nexus of multi-membership and a relation between the global and the local (Wenger, 1998, p. 149). His view about the unique nature of identity concurred with those of others as presented above;

- Identity is fundamentally temporal (Dahl, 2020; Day et al., 2006; Beijaard et al., 1995, Danielewicz, 2001) and ongoing (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009, Trent, 2010; Nickel and Zimmer, 2019)
- Identity is constructed in social contexts which, as discussed by Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), influence identity formation.

- Identity is defined by convergent and divergent trajectories – presented by Day and Kington as competing dimensions which 'disturb the equilibrium' (2008, p. 10).

Multi-membership within CoPs and constellations of practice

The idea of being a part of wider communities allowed me to consider another early thought relating to my research focus. I was aware from experience that this group of trainees often found themselves to be 'pulled in different directions', and perhaps I saw this as being particular to this route into teaching. Wenger however suggested that this is always the case in social learning contexts; 'we belong to several CoPs at any given time' (Wenger, 1998, p. 6) and argued that there was potential for 'overlap' between CoPs, resulting not in a merging of two communities, but an overlap in their practices. Wenger presented this as a situation in which learning can be enabled (Wenger, 1998, p. 115). While Wenger did not present this as a challenge in itself, he suggested that 'invisible' work was required by an individual to combine and reconcile the differences between the practices in different communities. The resulting identity is a nexus of the different meanings of multi-membership of different communities or groups that Wenger referred to as 'configurations'. These are the communities that are too diverse to be considered true CoPs, but their commonalities are similar enough to be considered a *constellation of practice*; they share historical roots, related enterprises, similar conditions, shared artifacts and overlapping styles and discourses (Wenger, 1998, p. 127). Given this, I argue that TAs are members of the CoP of TAs within their school, and members of the CoP of the school, but also are members of a wider constellation of practice of TAs (see figure 2).

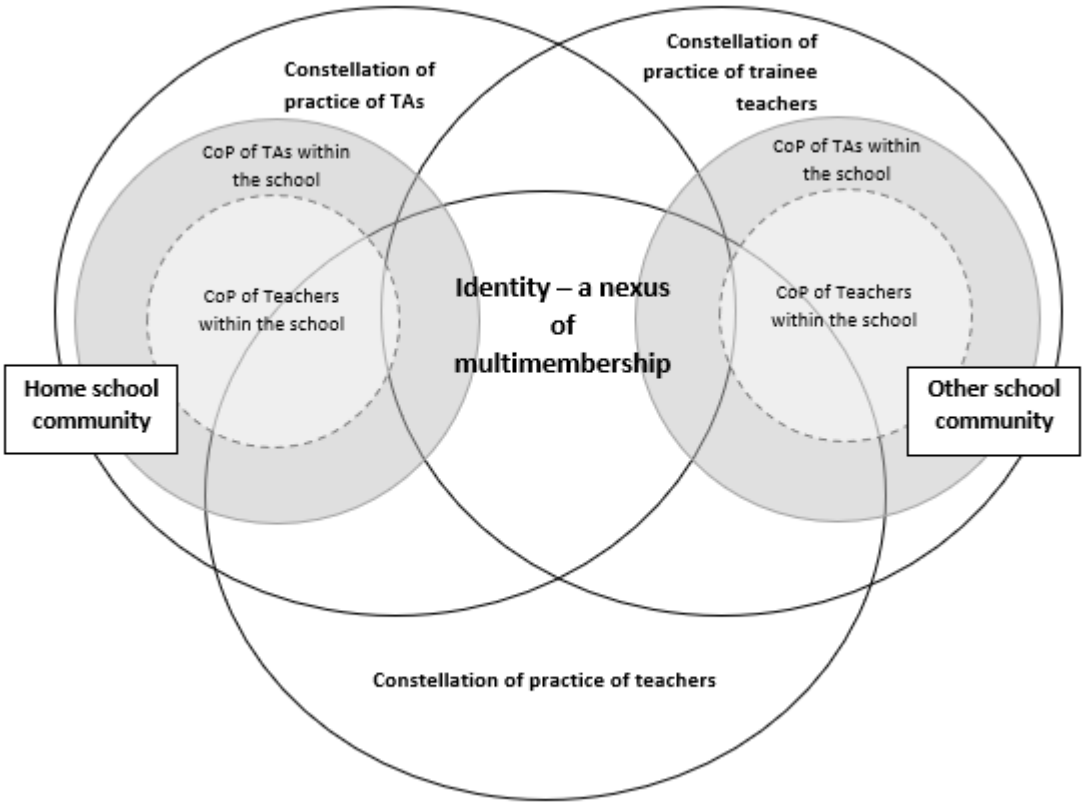

Figure 2 – TAs place in different CoPs (CoP) and constellations of practice.

2.3 Summary of literature review

Within this literature review, I aimed to consider how existing research could help me understand my three research questions:

- **Being a TA: in what ways do the skills, knowledge and attributes of a TA support or challenge TAs who train to teach?**
- **Training to teach: How does the experience of being part of a school community impact on TAs who are becoming teachers?**
- **Reflecting on a change in professional identity: How and when is the teacher identity of the TA training to teach formed?**

Being a TA: in what ways do the skills, knowledge and attributes of a TA support or challenge TAs who train to teach?

Research shows that there is little agreement or clarity in literature about the role of the TA (Kerry, 2005; Collins and Simco; 2006; Butt and Lowe, 2012; Johnson, 2018; Clarke and Visser, 2019). Large scale research (Blatchford, 2009) focusses on judging TAs efficacy though pupil outcomes fail to recognise what smaller scale studies show – that TAs are valued and seen to be supportive by teachers and pupils (Eyres et al., 2004; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Blatchford et al. 2002; Barkham, 2008). The DISS report and subsequent work by the same authors showed that TAs had negative impacts on pupil progress (Blatchford, 2009; Webster et al., 2011). Further work by Webster et al. (2011) suggested that wider dimensions of learning could be considered if it was felt that their role should be considered to be pedagogical (so fostering independence etc. rather than directly teaching), it needed further thought, but an alternative role for TAs could prioritise wider dimensions of learning rather than directly pedagogical tasks. Research by others shows that TAs do more than just focus on pupil learning (Barkham, 2008; Johnson, 2018, Butt and Lowe, 2012; Eyres and Cable, 2004; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Kerry 2005) including supporting the nurturing side (Syrnyk, 2018; Lehane, 2016) of the teaching role. As such, they are seen to be pivotal to what goes on in school (Mansaray, 2006).

There are many studies which attempt to clarify the task that TAs do (Butt and Lowe, 2012; Eyres and Cable, 2004; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Kerry 2005) with smaller studies (Roffey-Barentsen and Watt, 2014; Bowles et al., 2018; Syrnyk, 2018) which foreground TA voice

helping to provide understanding of how the role of the TA can support or challenge TAs becoming teachers. Key findings show that TAs work within a continuum – with some being fully integrated in the role but others finding themselves in a more fragmented position (Johnson, 2018). Communication, (McVittie, 2005; Woolfson and Truswell, 2005; Collins and Simco, 2006; Clarke and Visser, 2016), collaboration (Slater and Glazeley, 2018) and individual TA-teacher relationships (Eyres et al., 2004; Russell et al., 2005; Masaray, 2006; Devecchi and Rouse, 2010; Lehane, 2016), are seen to be very important, and a TA-teacher relationship based on mutuality is suggested by some (Slater and Glazeley, 2018) to better than a hierarchical relationship despite a clear implication in literature that TAs are a tool (Lehane, 2016) to be deployed by teachers.

There is a need for TAs to be adaptable, patient have good people skills, be open minded, conscientious and have good communication and organisational skills (Dunne et al., 2008). These skills align to some extent with those of teachers who need to be able to communicate well, see things from different perspectives and be tolerant showing that there are similarities between TA and teacher characteristics (Butt and Lowe, 2012; Wilson and Bedford, 2008; Twiselton and Goepel, 2018; Malderez et al., 2007).

There continues to be a blurring of the roles even relatively recently (Clarke, 2019) with children also not always being clear who does what in schools, particularly when considering whether TAs teach (Eyres et al. 2004). Research (Calder and Grieve, 2004) implies that some TAs in schools have opportunity to learn about teaching from experience, and some research implies that TAs do teach (Russell et al., 2005) although others (Wilson and Bedford, 2008) argue that what they do is not quite teaching.

It is clear that TAs generally learn on the job (Calder, 2003; Syrnyk; 2018), and while TAs can gain qualifications (Dunne et al., 2008a), these are not a national requirement for the role (NCS, 2020) despite the fact that the DISS team (Blatchford et al., 2009) said there was more need for training. The need for TA training is supported by others (e.g. Gerber et al., 2001; McVittie, 2005; Butt and Lance, 2005; Bland and Sleightholme, 2012; however over 10 years later, even following the far-reaching work by the EEF (TES/EEF, n.d.)., this is still being recommended by research (Syrnyk, 2018). There is limited CPD for TAs (Cajkler et al., 2007; Blatchford et al., 2009a, Dunne et al., 2008b). Russell et al. (2013) and Roffey-Barentsen and

Watt, (2014) also note there is a lack of time for TAs and teachers to communicate; this may be due to the fact national policy does not provide solutions for the financial challenges around finding time for communication let alone CPD and training (Skipp and Hopwood, 2019). Given that teachers are seen to lack training in how to deploy TAs (Calder, 2003; Calder and Grieve, 2004) let alone to train them, an 'on the job' training approach seems to be flawed. It could be argued that personalised training is required due to the diverse background of TAs (McVittie, 2005; Butt and Lowe, 2012).

Whether the term 'teaching assistant' is the most appropriate to explain their role seems to be an important aspect of the debate that continues around what the role should involve. In Australia where children did know the difference between TAS and Teachers it is interesting to see that the term 'teach*ers* assistant' is used (Butt, 2016), and I argue that given the significant amount of research which discusses the many non-pedagogical tasks that TAs fulfil, there is a need to accept that TAs work *should* encompass what might be described as the 'menial' tasks which remain part of every day in a primary school.

The lack of clarity over the terminology used, varied job roles that TAs carry out in different schools, patchy training (Russell et al., 2005) and lack of CPD means that TAs' individual experiences in their varied roles are more important when considering their training to become teachers; I suggest that it is not being a TA *per se* that influences their potential to become a teacher, but a combination of individual professional experiences, identity within a school community and personal characteristics that prepare them for teacher training. Hence, not all TAs can be teachers, but some are well-prepared to train to teach.

Training to teach: How does the experience of being part of a school community impact on TAs who are becoming teachers?

The process of becoming a teacher is not clear (Caires, 2012), and there are questions over what a typical trainee looks like (Burn et al, 2015) because trainee teachers all have different previous experiences and expectations. Added to this, negotiating the dual role of learner and teacher at the same time is a complex process.

Teachers possess a unique insight into their chosen profession from their own time in schools as a pupil (Burns et al. 2015), but this does not represent the learning required for

teaching. Different authors suggest different domains of knowledge are required in teaching (Richards, 2018; Burn et al., 2015; Furlong and Maynard, 1995) including knowledge about pupils, strategies, learning or pedagogy, curriculum, educational contexts.

However, if can be seen that there is more to teaching than simply learning about these domains of knowledge or adopting the role (Malderez et al., 2007; Danielewicz, 2001). Trainee teachers are concerned with relationships during their training, the emotional impact of teacher training and their developing identity, as well as being preoccupied about whether parts of their training were relevant in their opinion (Hobson et al., 2008; Malderez et al., 2007).

Clarke (2016) argued that learning in work-based contexts could limit opportunity for reflection but Eraut's (1994) modes of professional knowledge support the view that a balance between university and school-based learning is most appropriate in teacher education. Others agree that teacher knowledge is developed through experience and learnt in practice (Furlong and Maynard, 1995; Burn et al., 2015; Twiselton and Goepel, 2018).

Far less tangible concepts are also important factors to consider during teacher training. Research shows that trainee teachers progress through stages of learning which involve moving from a focus on themselves, to a focus on pupil learning (Malderez et al., 2007; Clarke 2016; Furlong and Maynard, 1995). Burn et al. (2015) also identified a model which explained trainee teachers' attitudes to learning about teaching within five dimensions of learning - they noted a close alignment between trainee teachers with a positive disposition for learning and the opportunities given to them which facilitated more effective learning about teaching.

Reflecting on a change in professional identity: How and when is the teacher identity of the TA training to teach formed?

Teacher identity is an important (Shepens et al., 2009; Rodriques and Mogarro, 2019) and much written about (e.g. Danielewicz, 2001; Johnson, 2003; Beijaard et al., 2004; Day et al., 2005, Malderez et al., 2007) concept, yet a definition that encompasses all ideas about teacher identity remains elusive (Beijaard et al., 2004). Four key themes emerge; teacher

identity is dynamic, it consists of sub-identities, it involves agency and is defined by a person's perception of themselves within a group (Beijaard et al. 2004) and is therefore also dependent on others perception of themselves and social relations (Danielewicz, 2001). Others whose ideas have synergies with Wenger's (1998) CoP suggest that identity is about teacher's beliefs and how they shape the decisions they make (Nickel and Zimmer; 2019; Rodriques and Mogarro, 2019) and is a narrative by which teachers can explain their lives (Connolley and Clandinin, 1999; Sfard and Prusak, 2005). One idea that is considered by some is that trainee teachers need to 'play the part' of the teacher (Danielewicz, 2001; Malderez et al., 2007) as they under-go a role-shift (Hobson et al., 2008); Danielewicz (2001) argued that this is how teacher identity begins.

It is widely recognised that teacher identity is multi-faceted and dynamic (Dahl, 2020; Day et al., 2006; Beijaard et al., 1995, Danielewicz, 2001; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009, Trent, 2010; Nickel and Zimmer, 2019), and influenced by ever changing factors such as context (Findlay, 2006), motivation and tacitly acquired understanding (Shepens et al., 2009) and prior experiences (Malderez et al, 2007). Rodrigues and Mogarro (2019) went as far as to argue that these variables *are* teacher identity. Identity can be seen as a nexus of multi-membership (Wenger, 1998; Schifter, 1996; Danielewicz, 2001; Beijaard et al., 2004) or as multifaceted (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Dahl, 2020; Bejiard, 1995) or perhaps as both, but it is commonly understood that tensions within identity or between identities require a balance to be found (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Day, Kington, Stobart and Sammons, 2006).

During training, trainee teachers arguably experience greater changes in identity meaning this early stage of their career is particularly critical in identity development (Nickel and Zimmer, 2019; Hobson et al., 2008). As a beginning teacher identity is formed, or when a person begins to see themselves as a teacher, a greater sense of agency is achieved (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Danielewicz; 2001). The challenges (Hogden and Askew, 2007; Androusou and Tsafos, 2018) implicit in significant identity change that occur through subtle changes in practice (Dahl, 2020) do not come easily and perhaps deserve greater consideration during training programmes (Rodrigues and Mogarro, 2019).

Tensions can also be seen within relationships during teacher training. The mentor-student teacher relationship is important because the mentor is both a role model and an assessor.

Other people's views impact on both identity formation and self-esteem; an individual compares themselves with those that are 'in group' (Stets and Burke, 2000), but the challenge with others being involved in teacher identity formation is that this makes individuals vulnerable, which may make them feel that they ought to comply with others' ideas regardless of their own beliefs (Flores and Day, 2006). The degree to which student teachers feel they have autonomy also seems to be important in professional identity development. Those that have chance to be autonomous, view themselves as teachers (Siraj-Blatchford, 1993) and consider themselves to be teachers more than those who had not had opportunity to engage in legitimate peripheral participation within a CoP (Hobson et al, 2008).

Prior experience is important in the process of learning to teach (Burns et al, 2018; Androusou and Tsafos, 2018). Student teachers begin training with preconceptions about the role of the teacher, based on their own experiences (Goodson and Cole, 1994; Shepens et al. 2009, Sugrue (1997). These have a strong influence on their professional identity (Flores and Day, 2006; Shepens et al, 2009; Surgue, 1997; Androusou and Tsafos (2018). As such, there is the danger that student teachers' professional identity may be hindered by negative prior experience (Calderhead, 1988). However, student teachers who have some prior understanding about policies and practices have a 'head start' in comparison to others (Twiselton and Goepel, 2018).

The emotional impact of training to teach is a significant influence on teacher identity development (Yuan and Lee, 2016; Burn et al., 2015; Malderez et al, 2017; Hobson et al., 2008). When beliefs are challenged, individuals are in a vulnerable position in terms of teacher identity development (Day and Kington, 2008; Beijaard et al., 2004), but the emotional response to situations informs teacher identity in that it informs future decision making (Zemblyas, 2005). A range of stressful situations that student teachers may encounter (Day and Kington, 2008; Glazzard, 2016) along with positive situations (Hobson et al., 2008) are presented in literature. Dahl (2020) refers to these as 'turning points'.

3. Methodology and Methods

3.1 Ontology

My work with many teaching assistants and trainee teachers over recent years has resulted me adopting a postmodern ontological position as summarised by Webster and Mertova:

> 'Postmodernism…maintains that each person brings their own 'baggage', or past life experiences to a situation. Truth and knowledge from the postmodern perspective is a constructed reality (worldview) and there is no objective truth (Carson, 1996)' (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 29).

Reality is human-centred, holistic and subjective; there are multiple truths. Considering the value of contextualisation and cultural influence, or as Pinegar and Daynes put it, 'capturing the particular and the local' (Pinegar and Daynes, 2007, p. 8), allowed me to address the subjective nature of schools, TAs and teacher education within this study.

Within the postmodern paradigm, a constructionist, interpretivist approach was adopted, allowing me to gain a greater understanding of the 'multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge' (Robson, 2002, p. 27). While some authors make a distinction between constructionism and interpretivism, others discuss 'constructionism' and 'interpretivism' almost interchangeably; 'in a process of constructing meaning, there is a process of interpretation and vice versa' (Gibson, 2017, p. 62). Whether choosing to present the two approaches as separate or combined, aspects of both resonate with my own ontological position; it was Gibson's view that 'constructionism [is] the idea that people construct their understandings of the world rather than encounter them passively [and] meaning is constructed through culture and language' (Gibson, 2017 p. 62). Cohen, Manion and Morrison suggested that interpretive paradigms strive to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors (2011, p. 31) with this approach allowing for interpretation and the process by which people make sense of their experiences (Gibson, 2017, p. 62). Over time, working with trainee teachers from diverse backgrounds, and with mentors in many different schools, it has become apparent that there is no 'script' that can be followed. I believe this is because different people adopt different approaches in their professional practice – they construct their own understanding of the world, making sense of their lived experience alongside others. The acquisition of the perspectives of different TAs training to teach in different schools will provide a way of understanding their multiple realities

(Robson, 2002) through a co-created understanding of their place in their school's natural setting (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) which can also be seen as a CoP.

This relativist ontological position which allows for multiple realities aligns with that of Wenger, which led me to consider CoPs as a conceptual framework within which to conduct my research. Wenger presented four premises; that a central aspect of learning is the fact that we are social beings; that knowledge is matter of competence in valued enterprises; that knowing involves participating in, or actively engaging in such enterprises; and that ultimately, learning produces meaning (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). As such, the central focus of Wenger's theory of CoPs was on learning as social participation, and that active participants in social communities construct their identities in relation to these communities (Wenger, 1998). Anecdotally, trainees on the PTS programme have articulated they are in the midst of a complex battle to understand their place; they see themselves as TA, trainee teacher or teacher. How others saw them, and how they felt 'pulled' in different directions at different times during their training adds confusion to their attempts to define their identity. This led me to consider the idea of teacher identity formation in more depth and Wenger's assertion that identity is temporal was particularly useful in that it aligned with the complex journey that this group of trainees take. Wenger argued that seeing identity as a trajectory that undergoes constant renegotiation, incorporating the past and the future in the process of negotiating the present, enabled 'ways of sorting out what matters and what does not, what contributes to our identity and what remains marginal' (Wenger, 1998, p. 155).

3.2 Methodology

Narrative inquiry is a methodological approach that enables researchers to capture the 'whole story' in all its 'complexity and richness' and gain an understanding of experience from the perspective of the participant (Webster and Mertova, 2007). There is a close alignment between Wenger's (1998) concept of shared repertoire and the understanding it enables, and the idea of understanding the world as presented here by Webster and Mertova:

> 'Narrative inquiry is set in human stories of experience. It provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories' (2007, p. 1).

Many forms of qualitative research involve collecting and constructing stories about participants, but narrative researchers specifically consider 'the study of stories or narratives or descriptions of a series of events'. What counts as a story, and the methods used to study the story may vary (Pinegar and Daynes, 2007, p. 4-5). Arguably, similar methodological approaches had been used previously, but the term 'narrative inquiry' was first used by Connelly and Clandinin in 1990 to explain a growing approach to research in teacher education that foregrounded personal storytelling; it was seen as a way to make our choices, attitudes and values visible to us and provide a critical perspective on educational experiences (Webster and Mertova, 2007).

Critical events

An important aspect of the narrative inquiry approach is the idea that within the stories told, events occur (Webster and Mertova, 2007; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). A critical event, which Woods defined as being unplanned, unpredicted and revealed within storytelling is one which has the 'right mix of ingredients and the right time and in the right context' (Woods, 1993, p.102). Webster and Mertova wrote that 'a critical event as told in a story reveals a change of understanding or worldview by the storyteller' and that it has an impact on their performance in a professional role (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 72). Discovering these critical events could be key to understanding PTS trainees' stories, and how their worldview changed as they became teachers. Webster and Mertova agreed with Woods that critical events cannot be anticipated, and that they can 'only ever be identified [as critical events] afterwards' (2007, p.74). They assert that 'the longer the time that passes

between the event and recall of the event, the more profound the effect of the event has been and the more warranted is the label *critical* event' (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 74). Strauss and Corbin (1990) also suggested that 'we can only make judgements of [an action] when it is already past. Past activities are viewed in a new light through reassessment and selective recollection' (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 77). Reflection on critical events challenges the storytellers' worldview and results in a change in way they behave of carry out their professional role (Webster and Mertova, 2007). This important principle of narrative inquiry influenced my choice of data collection methods.

My critical event

The idea resonated with my research at one specific point; a 'critical event' in my own research story enabled me to reflect on and reconsider my methodological approach. Before and during the early stages of my data collection, I had felt that my research was phenomenological in nature or describing and interpreting the lived experience (Henrickson and Friesen, 2012), but following an interview early on in my data collection in which one participant clearly wanted to share their story in their way – this was one of their 'critical events', and at this point, my views changed. The participant had been offered a teaching post at a school, and was clearly eager to share this with me; she had (in response to my email to arrange the next interview) written 'I am not giving anything away [in the email]. How long have you got?!' [smiling emoji]. When we met, I asked her to 'tell me everything' but she asked instead to work through my questions, and we would see if those would cover the story she was keen to tell; it was as if she wanted to get my agenda out of the way before she could share her story. Around the same time, another participant had woven her personal circumstances into answers to many of my questions; it was clear that a situation with her husband's job was having an impact on her ability to concentrate on her training. At this point, I realised that capturing the 'whole story' and avoiding the omission of important 'intervening stages' (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 3-4) was more important to me than following a phenomenological approach that aimed to elicit generalisable 'essences' (Henriksson and Friesen, 2012) of the TA to teacher transition. Adopting a narrative inquiry approach and allowing participants to tell their stories helped 'to make sense of, evaluate, and integrate the tensions inherent in experience' (Dyson and Genishi, 1994, p. 242). As already highlighted, the tensions inherent in this specific route into

teaching are many. These tensions tend to present challenges, but it was clear from what the participants were telling me that it was critical events that enabled professional learning in teaching.

Teacher Education

Narrative Inquiry as a methodological approach has its roots in teacher education (Webster and Mertova). Webster and Mertova claimed 'that what we know in education comes from telling each other stories of educational experience…narrative inquiry is concerned with analysing and criticising the stories we tell, hear and read in the course of our work' and our often informal, social interactions' (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 7). These interactions, which arguably are developed through very informal processes such as understanding the 'latest gossip' (Wenger, 1998), are a key aspect of membership of a CoP. The uniqueness of identity, and of different unique experiences within different CoPs make narrative inquiry 'well suited to addressing the complexities and subtleties of human experience in teaching and learning' (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 1), aligning with Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) view that ontologically speaking, there are 'multiple realities'. A narrative approach therefore enabled me to address all of my research questions, but most particularly my consideration of *How and when is the teacher identity of the TA training to teach formed?*.

Temporality

The changing nature of people's understanding of their own stories over time was also an aspect of narrative inquiry that aligned with my epistemological stance. In comparison to more traditional approaches to research which aim to elicit findings that are timeless, within narrative inquiry, temporality is a central feature, with context being acknowledged as similarly important (Webster and Mertova, 2007). The fact that teacher training is not a time-bound process is important; teacher training does not begin on day one of a QTS programme and does not end at graduation. It is clear through my work with trainee teachers on this route into teaching that a person's whole educational life impacts on their identity as a teacher; it is not just about what happens during the 16-month training programme. Indeed, recent publications from the Department for Education (DfE) and Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) support the idea that training should carry on well into teachers' early careers (DfE, 2021c). While I hope to be able to follow up the career

developments of the participants in this study in years to come, it was ethically important to me to adopt a methodological approach that allowed my participants to perhaps benefit from their reflections of their training experience and transition from TA to teacher, and also enable them to see that this was part of a journey that began before the research began and will continue well after my thesis is submitted. Their learning as a teacher was not confined to the duration of the training programme, and the stories that they told reflected their 'journey through life' (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 25) acknowledging 'that time is critical in the learning process, that deeper learning and expert strategies take a long time to develop' (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 22).

Joint construction and relationships

The idea of the researcher as a 'narrator' who presents and critiques the 'whole story' was particularly interesting to me; over my years of working with PTS trainees, it had become clear that there was not a 'typical' story. Each TA training on this route begins the training programme from a different starting point, so as a researcher, presenting a generalisable summary would have failed to address Webster and Mertova's 'complexities and subtleties of human experience in teaching and learning' (2007, p. 1).

Hanrahan and Cooper (1995) and Pinegar and Daynes (2007) both discussed the relationship between the researcher and the participant. Hanrahan and Cooper (1995) suggested that narrative inquiry could 'bridge the divide' between researchers and practitioners enabling a co-creation of knowledge (Hanrahan and Cooper, 1995). Pinegar and Daynes (2007) took this further asserting that 'we become narrative inquirers only when we recognize and embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship, primarily using stories as data and analysis' (Pinegar and Daynes, 2007, p. 7). An aspect of my research that I had perhaps failed to consider at the outset was the relationship that I would build with each participant, and the changing nature of those relationships. 'Narrative inquirers recognize that the researcher and the researched in a particular study are in relationship with each other and that both parties will learn and change in the encounter' (Pinegar and Daynes, 2007, p. 9). As such, rather than working to separate myself as researcher, it became clear that my data would be richer because relationships had been formed. Embracing the changes that would occur in both me and the participants was an authentic

reflection on the postmodern perspective that there is no objective truth, and that experience, even the experience of undertaking the research, has an impact on the construction of knowledge.

Change

Hanrahan and Cooper (1995) suggested that change was an important aspect of narrative inquiry research design and went as far as to say it was an 'integral and even necessary part of the process of constructing knowledge'. From the perspective of the researcher, Pinegar and Daynes (2007, p. 7) also considered change as an important aspect within narrative inquiry. They discussed four 'turns' or changes in thinking that a researcher may make in becoming a narrative inquirer 'highlight[ing] the fact that such changes can occur rapidly or slowly, depending on the experience of the researchers and their experiences when doing research' (2007., p.7) and that these may not happen in any particular order. The concept of four turns seems to reflect my development as a researcher during the study, particularly my lack of confidence around my initial methodological choices. Changes in my thinking occurred during the collection of data for my research, and arguably could not have been planned or predicted at the outset of my data collection; only as I came to know the participants individually did I understand that a change in relationship had occurred, and that reducing my findings to anything other than the story of their lived experience in order to attempt to generalise the experience of a TA becoming a teacher would not help me understand the multiple realities TA training to teach.

Summary and link to CoP

To summarise and reflect on the synergies between narrative inquiry and CoPs, it appears that there are many aspects of both that link to teacher education: learning teaching from experience (Ellis and Orchard, 2014); experiences encoded as some form of narrative (Webster and Mertova, 2007); being part of a community in which experiences can be expressed and learnt from while teacher identity is shaped as a part of that community (Wenger, 1998). Webster and Mertova (2007) wrote that the 'critical events that are of most interest of researchers are most likely to occur within communities of practice' (p. 83), referring to Wenger's (1998) work. As an authentic methodological approach for research into aspects of teacher education, the roots of narrative inquiry lie in the work of Clandinin

and Connelly in the 1980s and their research into the work of teacher educators. These synergies are not unsurprising; a person cannot train to teach in a vacuum because being a teacher means being part of a learning community. Being part of, and learning in, a CoP involves mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). Stories 'are shaped by lifelong personal and community narratives' (Webster and Mertova (2007) p. 2) and the 'anecdotes, gossip, documents…that we use to construct and convey meaning in our daily lives are the instruments of the storytelling process' (p. 7), aligns with Wenger's (1998) view that *shared repertoire* involves is the telling of stories and a shared history, or community narrative. *Joint enterprise* (Wenger, 1998) includes a common understanding of what matters and what does not – which arguably may be learnt in part through the recounting of and reflection on critical events (Clandidin and Connelly, 1990). *Mutual engagement*, an element of which is the sustained engagement in relationships (Wenger, 1998) is built through the sharing of stories.

3.3 Methods

From the view of the participants

It was important to me to consider my methods for data collection through an interpretivist/constructivist lens. Gibson wrote that in 'interpretivist/constructivist theory:

> 1. Language and culture are the perspectives through which all meaning is situated.
> 2. People interpret the world through the perspectives of their own lived, languages, cultures as well as their own biographies…
> 3. …and they produce/negotiate meaning with other people, in particular social contexts of activity.
>
> Therefore:
>
> 4. Meaning is not static but changing, multiplicitous, and dependent on context.
> 5. Facts are not independent of our perspectives on the world, but are always interpreted through our own frames of reference.
> 6. Social researchers need to try to understand culture from the insider's point of view, not from the point of view of their own culture' (Gibson, 2017, p. 62).

Given this, using interviews as my primary source of data collection seemed fitting, enabling me to understand participants different perspectives of their professional development depending on the meaning they discovered in different and changing context based on their own frames of reference.

Using interviews also allowed the elicitation of critical events (Webster and Mertova, 2007), and for me to draw on the work of Wenger who suggested that a sudden insight might be the point when 'we are finally recognised as a full member of a community' (Wenger, 1998, p. 8). Interviews throughout the programme which involved reflection on past experiences would enable both the participants and me to recognise an event as 'critical', or one that resulted in a change in worldview (Webster and Mertova, 2007).

This aspect of 'sudden insights' in Wenger's writings not only aligned with a narrative inquiry approach, but particularly interested me as my fascination with my theme had originated from a conversation with a teacher who had trained on the PTS programme around five years ago. She described to me an incident that had happened in school during one of her teaching placements and explained this was the exact point that she had realised

that she had responsibility for the children in the class, and therefore she was the teacher in both their, and her own eyes. Her excited words were something along the lines of 'Now I get it. Now I am a teacher!'. In order to discover these insights during my research, and in keeping with the constructivist paradigm which suggests there are multiple interpretations and perspectives surrounding each situation and experience, interviews allowed me to 'examine situations through the eyes of the participants rather than the researcher' (Cohen et al., 2011, p.17). Alongside interviews, supporting documentary evidence provided both data and opportunity for discussion and reflection in interviews. The timings of the interviews and documentary evidence that would be gathered during pre-training, training and post-training periods are shown in appendix 2.

Interviews

In discussing interviewing people, Wellington wrote that the process 'can be one of the most enjoyable and interesting activities in a research study [as they] reach the parts that other methods cannot reach' (2015, p.137). However, while interviews allow us to 'probe an interviewee's thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perspectives' and uncover the multiple truths within an educational setting (Wellington, 2015, p.137), they need to be carried out with caution. Smith (1972, p.19-26) warns against too much social involvement which may result in bias, that overly long interview schedules can result in inattention and fatigue and that the truth may be distorted by both interviewer and interviewee. In order to address these concerns, initially, a semi-structured, 'interview guide approach' (Patton, 1990, p. 206) was adopted. This allowed both flexibility that ensured interviews were not overly long, but also time to develop an effective, but not overly socially involved researcher/participant relationship to develop. The semi-structured approach also allowed for me to plan topics for discussion in advance, and enabled me to fill in gaps in data. The weaknesses of the interview guide approach are that as Patton suggested, important points may be inadvertently missed (Patton, 1990). This needed to be taken into consideration during analysis, however, the benefit of being able to make comparisons between responses of different participants by adhering to a loose structure outweighed the possibility that salient topics may be omitted.

As time progressed, and my relationship with the participants developed, what they felt they needed to tell me deviated from the themes that I had planned. Denscombe argued that most interviews 'slide back and forth' along a continuum between being semi-structured and structured (2007, p 176). Thus, structuring the interview became less important over time; the stories that the participants told were their critical events. As such, later interviews became virtually unstructured with simple general areas of interested identified (Robson, 2002).

Authors (Robson, 2002; Denscombe, 2007) see interviews as being anything from an interactive, two-way exchange of views between interviewer and interviewee to the researcher being a data collection 'sponge' who soaks up participants' responses without comment, although Wellington suggests the latter is seldom likely to happen in educational research (Wellington, 2015, p. 138-139). While my own experience as an interviewer for research purposes was limited at the outset of my data collection, my experience as an interviewer for selection purposes was extensive. This perhaps resulted in my approach to interviews being more towards the 'sponge' end of the spectrum described above; in listening back to recordings of interviews, I noticed that my own offering of views and perspectives was generally limited to words of encouragement rather than an exchange of opinions. However, the aspect that I did find challenging at times was removing my 'programme leader hat'; in some of the interviews I realised I had responded to questions asked by the participants about the programme. However, this perhaps allowed me to reveal aspects of myself to the participants; something that Wellington argues needs to happen in the interviewing process (Wellington, 2015, p. 139).

Documentary research

Documentary research was also used during the study in two ways. During some of the interviews, I asked participants to fill in single sided sheets that involved making choices about roles in school, or drawing themselves in communities that they feel part of, or completing a graph – this became a prompt within the semi-structured interview, and all were designed to elicit critical events. As the participants filled in these documents, I encouraged them to continue talking as they were deciding how to complete the task. I recorded them during this part of the interview, but did not fully transcribe these aspects of

the interview when many comments were simply statements like ‘um, teacher for that’ or ‘yes, certainly for that one’. However, some comments proved interesting, particularly when participants engaged in a debate with themselves about how to complete the sheet – these were transcribed.

As part of my data collection, and to triangulate interview data, a categorisation task was completed at the start of their training and once they had qualified. Thirty-six TA tasks were identified from research (see appendix 1) and shared with participants who were asked to decide whether TAs, teachers, both or neither should carry out each task. All participants understandably based this on personal experience, but also on what generally happened in their own school. A table showing the data in its entirety can be seen in Appendices 4, and in summary (figure 3) the outcomes show that there are more tasks that TAs see as tasks done by both teachers and TAs than are done just by teachers. There are no tasks that more than one TA suggested were only tasks for TAs.

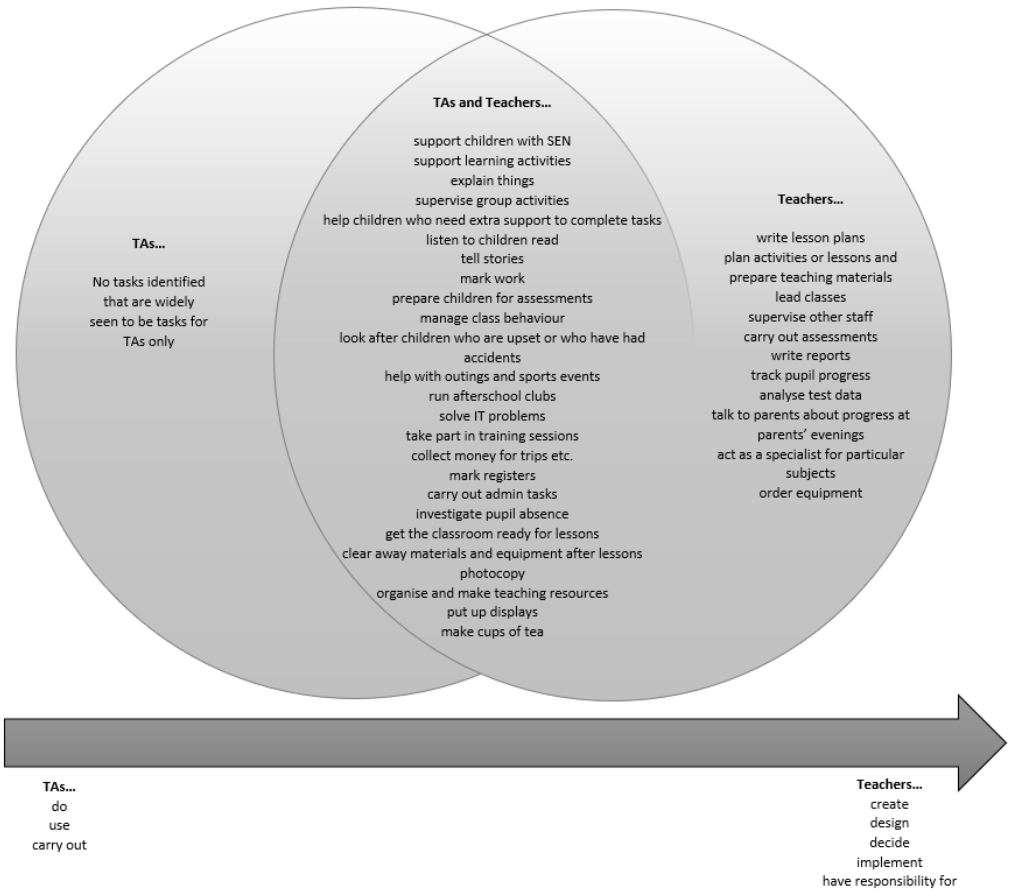

Figure 3 – What do TAs and teachers do?

My participants' view of their place within various communities was considered in a communities document that they completed twice (see appendix 5). When discussed in interviews, 'communities' referred loosely to groups rather than the communities of practice as defined by Wenger. This allowed participants to consider 'community' however made sense to them; indeed, some of the groups I used on this sheet would be seen by Wenger to be *constellations of practice* rather than true CoPs (Wenger, 1998). Similarly, when I asked participants 'what are you now?' at the beginning of each interview, I did not discuss concepts relating to identity theory. Their responses, along with identification of critical events, helped me triangulate my participants' views of their changing identity during the training, a summary of which can be seen in Appendix 6. In the communities document, participants were told that they could put their stick figures in as many communities as they wanted to. Some initially seemed to feel they could not go in more than one, or that if they were in one specific community, they could not be in another. As such some of the initial responses showed stick figures in some communities but not others. When I revisited this 12 months later, they seemed less worried about this and all placed themselves in all of the communities.

I also made some use of the participants' electronic Records of Professional Development (eRPD), a personal and closed document only available to insiders (Wellington, 2015, p. 210), in this case, each teacher trainee at BGU, their school-based mentor (SBM) for each placement, and university-based mentors (UBM) and lecturers. This portfolio provides the evidence required to show that trainees have met the criteria for the award of qualified teacher status (QTS), currently the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2013), and could be seen as a 'boundary object'; an object that co-ordinates the perspectives of various actors for a purpose (Wenger, 1998, p.106). Individual trainees have ownership of the document, but school-based mentors also have access and may comment on the weekly meeting records, final review documents or lesson observations etc. reflecting Wenger's view that a boundary object such as this is only partially controlled by any one constituent (1998, p. 108 - the trainee writes the weekly review, the mentor adds comments, the university tutor reads, each with different jurisdictions over the material. However, the value of using such an object in my data collection was the possibility that it would provide a nexus of

perspectives (Wenger, 1998, p. 108) and allow for consideration during interviews of critical events that the trainees had already identified. In assessing the value of the eRPD, it was important to consider the authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning (Scott, 1990, p. 6-8) of what was written within the document. The credibility of a document that is being used as support during an assessment process is perhaps questionable in terms of my research, and in reading the eRPDs, I needed to remain conscious of the fact that the participants were writing these knowing that their assessors would be reading them. Additionally, I needed to consider the meaning I was able to elicit from these accounts; 'what is it and what does it tell us?' (Scott, 1990, p. 8). Wellington would argue that 'its meaning depends on the intentions of the author(s) and the perspectives of the reader' (Wellington, 2015, p. 214).

Sampling

The particular top-up degree programme from which my participants were recruited usually comprises a cohort of 28-35 students. The entry requirements for the programme stipulate the successful completion of a relevant (e.g. within the field of education) foundation degree (FdA), that applicants meet the current national requirements for qualified teacher status (QTS) programmes and crucially, have a minimum of two years working as a teaching assistant (paid or voluntary) for a minimum of two days per week. Hence, all students enrolled on the programme were potential participants for my study, and from this a convenience sample of participants was selected (Cohen, et al., 2011) based on their availability and willingness to participate. The sample could also be considered as a convenience sample as the participants were easy to access being students with whom I work (Wellington, 2015, p. 118).

Following my request by email to all students due to enrol on the programme in September 2018, six people responded that they would be willing to help. It was interesting that coincidentally, the six respondents who became participants could be seen to present a critical sample as they turned out to be 'special cases for certain purposes' or a maximum variation sample in that they were a 'wide range of different cases' (Wellington, 2015, p. 120). One out of the six was male (at 16% of the sample this is slightly more than the 10% average on the course (anonymous HEI data) but in-line with data showing 16% of teachers

in primary teaching were male at the end of 2018) (DfE, 2019b). One out of the six worked in an independent school - only 6% of Lincolnshire schools are independent (Lincolnshire Research Observatory, 2019), three worked in academies and two in mainstream schools – currently 48% of schools in Lincolnshire are maintained, and 43% are academies (Lincolnshire Research Observatory, 2019), so considering the small scale of my study, broadly in line with the region. The schools in which they worked ranged from small schools with 4 classes to large schools with 14 classes (the average state-funded primary school now has 282 pupils on role, in average class sizes of 27.4 equating to just over 10 classes per school (DfE, 2019b)). Three of the six participants were not employed by the school but working on a voluntary basis. The participants also came with a range of experience and had had different 'life journeys' that led to the point of training to teach. This meant that the sample, fortuitously, reflected the variety of prior experience, school settings and personal characteristics of previous cohorts of PTS students with whom I had worked in recent years, and arguably also bore similarities with the teaching assistant (TA) population as a whole (generally female 93% but with some males 7% (anonymous HEI data)).

Compromise is an intrinsic part of educational research (Wellington, 2015, p. 109) and in using one particular participant, there was an element of compromise; at the outset of my data collection, she was just beginning employment as an unqualified teacher (UQT), rather than as a teaching assistant (TA). Her school had offered her the role unexpectedly to start in September 2018 at the same time the course commenced. While initially this may have been seen to rule her out of the sample, I decided to continue to use her within the research as she herself explained that she was 'not yet a teacher'.

Who were my participants?

Table 6 below summarises some key characteristics of my participants.

	Nicole	Jayne	Laura	Jake	Katie	Louise
Estimated age / gender	Mid-20s / female	Early 40s / female	Mid-20s / female	Mid-20s / male	Early-40s / female	Mid-30s / female
'Home' School All schools were in the East Midlands.	Large new academy (three form entry although no Y6 class at the start of the data collection) part of a large MAT in a large coastal town.	Small (one form entry) village primary school in rural area	Medium sized (2 form entry) academy part of a small MAT in a large urban town.	Small independent school in rural market town. Small class sizes (11-24) currently 1-2 classes per year group	Large school (three form entry) in a large coastal town.	Very small village school (4 classes) in coastal region.
Context at the beginning of the course. All were working or volunteering as 'classroom TAs' rather than one-to-ones, apart from KJ.	Employed as TA in KS2 class. She joined the school at Easter in 2018, so has only been there a short while. Her teacher is new to the school from Sept 2018 and is leaving at Christmas 2018.	Voluntary TA in KS1 classes Began volunteering at the school a year before the course started. Does Monday and Tuesday officially, but often does extra.	Employed TA in KS1 class Been at the school since 16 initially as an apprentice TA.	Volunteering in all year groups. Employed at the school for 3-4 years until the start of the course. 2 days a week in a voluntary capacity but often does extra.	Employed as a UQT Joined the school about two years earlier as a TA. Was asked at the end of last school year if she would be a UQT from Sept 2018.	Volunteering in both KS. Recently joined this school in a voluntary capacity as the last school 'couldn't support her doing the course'
Background	Left school at 18 and due to birth of child did not go to university as planned. Apprenticeship as TA in another local primary school.	Struggled at school a bit and didn't go on to FE/HE post-16. Significant amount of work in nurseries/pre-school (13 years at the first) to 'deputy manager' level at second (7 years).	Didn't enjoy school herself and quite put off the university route by her experiences at school. Took TA apprenticeship route post-16.	He did work experience and loved the idea of teaching so went to do Level 3 childcare straight from school. Actively chose OU over a campus based HEI.	Previously worked at the council for 14 years but had wanted to be a teacher as a child. Redundancy prompted opportunity to work towards teaching.	Had been offered a place on a QTS BA programme at 18 but did not start the degree. Various jobs including TA employment since birth of daughter.
Number of different settings/schools worked in before this one	2 – one small village school apprentice TA then short time in secondary school as literacy intervention teacher.	2 – one a nursery attached to a primary school, one a village pre-school as deputy manager.	No others.	1 other – mainstream	1 other – secondary. Didn't seem to enjoy it.	3 others, one as paid TA
Pre-training confidence in…	Behaviour management, English, maths	None identified.	Implies confidence in most things – as already sees herself as a co-teacher.	IT generally presents a confident feeling.	Generally confident, particularly with behaviour.	Maths, behaviour
Pre-training – worries about…	Planning, Science.	Spelling, English, the level required for age groups other than EYFS. Maths skills test had been challenging. Planning.	Planning, assessment.	Subject knowledge in KS2, classroom control, SEN. Not particularly confident in planning.	Planning	How to teach, English, general subject knowledge.

Table 6 – A summary of participants' characteristics.

Of the TAs who agreed to participate in my study, initially all were working or volunteering as TAs apart from Katie who had very recently been offered the post of unqualified teacher in the school in which she had been a TA. Alongside this work, they were undertaking the BA (Hons) Primary Teaching Studies with QTS degree (PTS). The diversity in their backgrounds is important to bear in mind: whether they were employed or voluntary TAs; what route they had taken prior to become TAs; and what type or range of settings they had worked in had an impact on their understanding of working as TA within school CoPs, their training to become teachers and their identity formation.

Of the six who initially agreed to participate, one chose to withdraw from the QTS aspect of the degree for personal reasons towards the end of the course. She was happy to continue to participate in my research, but as she was no longer embarking on a transition from TA to teacher, with her consent, I withdrew her data from my study.

Voluntary/Paid – the TA role

Some were working on a voluntary basis and some on a paid basis. In years of working with PTS students, it has been clear that at times they have felt 'torn' between the requirements of the course, and the requirements of school; sometimes, these have not aligned,

particularly for employed TAs. If seeing the course as a participant's priority at one end of a scale, and the needs of the school at the other, it could be seen that some participants perhaps might have been more heavily directed by their employing school to put the needs of the school over the requirements of the course. Based on my previous experience of PTS students, Laura, Nicole and perhaps to an even greater extent Katie as paid employees were more likely to have experienced challenges in terms of balancing the needs of the course and the needs of their school. In all of my participants' cases, minor instances where they felt 'stretched' in different directions did occur, but not to a significant extent that their ability to complete their training was in jeopardy.

Two participants were in voluntary roles. In Jayne's case, she had secured voluntary experience to support her FdA and PTS training – and as such the school knew her from their first time in the school as a volunteer TA who was working towards teacher training. She had a very positive relationship there and felt supported and very appreciative of the opportunities offered there. She made the course requirements fit in around what happened at the school, choosing when she would dedicate more time than the required 2 days per week. Jake had worked for about 3 years as an employed TA in a private school while doing an OU foundation degree, but since embarking on the PTS programme, relinquished his employed post taking on a voluntary post in the same school – a change he made just before the course started which ensured teacher training could be his priority during the course. As such, he had been a 'normal' TA there, and found that in a voluntary capacity, little had changed in terms of others' expectations of him in the school. He had also previously worked in voluntary capacity in a primary state school as a TA.

Based on this range of prior experience, the views presented in my findings are the perspectives of five TAs with a range of prior and current experience working as TAs themselves and alongside many other TAs - collectively, my participants had worked in 14 schools between them before starting the programme, and all had at least 3 years' experience within the TA role or very similar roles (e.g. working in a nursery). It should be noted that none had worked in SEND schools; the focus of these findings is therefore on the TA role within mainstream settings as opposed to those specifically for children with SEND.

Becoming a TA, becoming a teacher – the training route

My participants had become TAs through various routes. All fell into Bach et al.'s (2006) 'ambitious' category; they saw the TA role as a 'stepping-stone' to a teaching career. Laura and Nicole had both taken on apprenticeship TA roles soon after leaving school; Laura had continued to work in the same school in which she undertook her apprenticeship and Nicole had moved from her apprenticeship school to a larger federation in which she had (at the point of starting the PTS programme) worked in one secondary academy and then her current primary academy. Jake had a longstanding desire to be a teacher but did not want to take a traditional university degree route, so began by completing a Level 3 qualification in childcare before doing an OU FdA allowing him to work as a TA during his studies. Jayne and Katie had had other careers before choosing to become TAs because they wanted to pursue a career in teaching – Jayne had worked in childcare for several years, but Katie's previous career had been unrelated to education.

As well as being able to share their own experiences of training, my participants also brought into discussions the experiences of their colleagues on the course. They generally spoke about their own experiences, but at times did make comparisons to others which were particularly interesting in understanding their perspective of their changing identity, but also how other trainees had for example coped with taking on early teaching posts or managing to adopt practices in other schools.

Access

Wellington considers the pragmatic approach of non-probability sampling, specifically noting an example of the ease of access in schools where the researcher already has contacts (2015, p. 117). In this way, I had gained 'easy' access to my participants as they joined a programme which I lead. In allowing them to choose the venue to ensure they felt comfortable (Denscombe, 2007), they facilitated my entry to their schools if required. Initially when considering this point, my first thought was that the school buildings would merely serve as venues in which interviews could take place, however on further consideration, I realised that they also enabled me to elicit various details about the participants and how their home school influenced them as a TA or as a trainee teacher. My first interview with Laura took place in her school's staff room with others wandering in and

out, with the participant at times seeking their opinions ('That's right isn't it Mrs M?'). Similarly in my first interview with Katie, I noticed that she lowered her voice as we sat in the huge, empty space at the far end of the school – seemingly reluctant to allow any other members of staff to hear her thoughts. A later interview involved her closing windows to ensure 'they' were not able to hear our conversation. Wenger in fact argued that the building is part of the CoP, another 'nexus of perspectives' of those within different communities and as such can be considered a 'boundary object…around which CoPs can organise their interconnections' (Wenger, 1998, p.105).

Researcher's potential impact on the research

In accepting that in qualitative research, the 'researcher is the key instrument, situated in the world being studied…researchers are part of the situation' (Wellington, 2015, p. 28), careful consideration of my own position as researcher was needed from a methodological perspective as well as an ethical perspective. Coe supports this: 'understanding the values and beliefs of the researcher is crucial to understanding their claims' (2012, p. 7). As the researcher, and however unintentionally or unconsciously, it was inevitable that I would impose my own interpretation to situations, and this might be influenced by my own views (Opie, 2004). One aspect that relates to my research is consideration of my early career experience and qualifications (having been through QTS training to become a primary school teacher), as well as my more recent experience as a teacher educator with responsibility for leading the course on which TAs training to teach are enrolled. However, unlike my participants, I have not been a teaching assistant myself so did not follow this teacher training route.

Within my research, the potential for 'reading too much' into participants' responses is something that I anticipated being challenging, so I decided to record and transcribe interviews word for word, and revisit with participants aspects that I felt on reflection I had added my own preconceptions to. Cohen, Manion and Morrison tell us that the researcher is 'inescapably part' of the world which they are researching (2011, p. 225), so ongoing consideration of how my own views may impact on findings, and how I prepared to limit this, was important.

Positionality

Dutta (2014) and Wellington (2015) recognised that the researcher has an influence on the situation being researched. Although my position as programme leader for the programme enabled ease of access to participants (Punch, 2009), my position as researcher in a situation where participants may view me as an 'insider' could have impacted on the validity and reliability of findings (Panalialoglou, Needham and Male, 2016). While Punch says that 'positionality' will always be a consideration in any research and that there is no research project that is 'position-free' (2009, p. 45), strategies such as ensuring that I was not involved in the recruitment or assessment of any of the students in this cohort were adopted to reduce the potential ethical impact.

Practitioner research such as mine falls neatly into the interpretive paradigm; Cohen et al. tell us 'that individuals' behaviour can only be understood by the researcher sharing their frame of reference: understanding of individuals' interpretations of the world around them has to come from the inside, not the outside' (2011, p. 15). There was a need to be aware of potential advantages and disadvantages of my position within the research; while my insider knowledge (Cohen et al., 2011) allowed for prior understanding of the context of the participants' training, and the settings in which it took place, there was also the potential for my preconceptions and prejudices to have an influence and so reflection on the research process was an important aspect to consider during data collection (Wellington, 2015). I had easier access to my participants and their settings (Punch 2009; Wellington, 2015), and greater insight into their individual situations, however, I was perhaps unlikely to be as open-minded as a non-practitioner (Wellington, 2015, p. 31).

3.4 Ethics

Ethical approval from both the University of Nottingham, and my employing university as the institute in which the participants studied, was gained. It was important to consider the principle that 'independence of research should be maintained and where conflicts of interest cannot be avoided, they should be made explicit' (ERSC, 2021). As such, I made use of a 'gatekeeper' (Silverman, 2010). In practical terms, due to my position as programme leader, I did not need to seek approval to physically gain access to the participants, but the fact that I have some control over the training that they undertook meant that it seemed ethically appropriate to also gain the support of my line managers as gatekeepers to ensure the well-being of the participants in my study (BERA, 2018). Participant information sheets and consent forms for both institutions were discussed with the potential participants; while they included the same information, the layout of the paperwork differed slightly. An explanation of the planned study was shared, along with the potential risks, description of the possible benefits and explicit reference was made to the fact that participants had the right to withdraw at any point. Participants were regularly reminded of this during the interviews.

Non-maleficence and beneficence (Cohen et al., 2011, p.87) were of great importance to me. As the programme leader for the degree for which my participants were studying, I wanted it to be very clear to the potential participants, and also to those who chose not to participate, that I would have as little contact as possible with the whole cohort for the duration of my study. A pilot study (Robson, 2002) was carried out to test the practicalities of my having limited engagement with the cohort - one PTS student was interviewed twice during her time on the course in the year preceding my main data collection and a member of staff was given the new role of 'cohort leader' during the academic year in which the pilot study was carried out. From this study, it became clear that separation could be maintained - it was decided that the cohort leader would deal with the day to day running of the course, and the issues that students generally presented to me would be dealt with by her. I was also able to arrange that I was not involved in any academic assignments or assessment in schools for the duration of the pilot study. This reassured me that I would be able to carry out the actual data collection in the same way. I made it clear to the participants, and academic staff that I should not be informed of any issues arising with this cohort of

students; if staff were not able to solve issues that arose with PTS students, they would be able to work instead with my line-manager for a resolution. Staff were not informed which students were participating. This was discussed with all participants too so that they were aware where they should go to seek support for any aspect of the course. I did not tell the participants that their participation should be kept secret; however, I ensured that I did not meet or talk with any of them as a group, so I was unaware whether they had identified their participation to each other or others in the cohort. The benefits potentially gained by the participants were limited to the albeit valuable enhanced opportunity to reflect on their professional development (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1987; Pollard, 1997; Bolton, 2014).

Arranging the interviews to suit the participants

As programme leader, I was also able to ensure that I worked around their commitments; I knew when they had deadlines approaching or were out in placement schools which meant that I could suggest interview times that had as little impact as possible. I travelled to the participants' schools or invited them to meet with me when they were on the university campus anyway, on each occasion suggesting a range of options so they could make a choice. I also was very conscious of ensuring I did not take up too much of their time (Denscombe, 2007) ensuring that interviews generally took no longer than one hour.

Informed consent

Ethically, Denscombe (2007) recognises potential problems with gaining informed consent from participants. While Robson (2002) and Cohen et al. (2011) endorse the idea that participants in educational research might be involved without their knowledge, in my own study, the informed consent of all participants was sought before research was carried out, and disclosure about the nature of the research taking place was shared (BERA, 2018; ERSC, 2021). Individuals taking part in the study were also regularly made aware of their right to withdraw at any point (BERA, 2018; ERSC, 2021).

Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity in terms of the participants' interview responses was not strictly be possible (Sapsford and Abbott, 1996) as there was a need for me to identify the responses given by participants within my own data so that their ideas could be reviewed during later

interviews with the same individuals. However, when findings were presented, participants' names were anonymised. There was no reason why confidentiality (Silverman, 2010; BERA, 2018) needed to be breached at any point in the study. However, I did ensure that participants were aware that should an issue regarding the safeguarding of children transpire, the government regulations relating to safeguarding (HM Government, 2018) would supersede those relating to research.

Generalisability, Validity and Reliability

The purpose of this study is to consider how and why things happen for a small number of TAs training to teach, so generalisability is not sought (Thomas, 2011). However, a form of generalisability – or 'broadening' (Connelly and Clandidin, 1990) was pursued to allow me to make use of the common themes discovered to support future TAs training to teach. Webster and Mertova support the idea that narrative inquiry is 'more concerned with individual truths than identifying generalisable and repeatable events' (2007, p.89).

In narrative inquiry, reliability considers the dependability of the data, and validity focusses on the ease of access to, and the trustworthiness of the data (Polkingthorne, 1988). Polkingthorne argued for a reconsideration of the criteria by which reliability and validity were measured in more traditional research; Huberman (1995) similarly suggested that measures such as honesty, verisimilitude, familiarity authenticity, access and transferability were more applicable in narrative inquiry. Webster and Mertova suggested that this meant that the responsibility of the researcher was therefore to 'collect, record and make accessible the data in ways that can be understood and used by those…having an interest in reading the data' (2007, p. 90).

Webster and Mertova (2007) dedicate a chapter of their book *Using Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method* to 'rethinking validity and reliability', reflecting the potential arguments that may be presented to those challenging the concepts of validity and reliability within narrative inquiry. They proposed that validity in its traditional sense should be reconceptualised as focusing on research being 'well-grounded and supportable' by data, rather than seeking to produce 'conclusions of certainty'. They suggested that verisimilitude, or the appearance of being true, is best found by using a framework of

‘critical’, ‘like’ and ‘other’ events, and can used to analyse similar issues. They also argued that ‘multiple interpretations are valid and that the real test of validity of any research should ultimately be done by those who read it and they should be the ones to decide on whether an account is believable’ (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 92), so providing my participants’ stories enables this albeit at a summarised, and limited level.

Reliability

In terms of reliability, Webster and Mertova wrote that ‘for narrative, it can be neither expected nor assumed that the outcomes from one narrative or a collection of stories will consistently return the same views or outcomes’ (2007, p. 93), and as such reliability should be judged by the accuracy and accessibility of the data (Webster and Mertova, 2007). They presented ‘access’ as meaning two things; firstly, the access that the readers of the study have of the context, process and construction of knowledge, and secondly the access to the data itself (Webster and Mertova, 2007). To address reliability within my study, the context (time, place and events) is visible within the participants’ stories, and the process and construction of knowledge is visible within the design of data collection (see appendix 2). In order to also address access to the data itself, Webster and Mertova’s approach to codifying data (see example in appendix 7) was adopted to ensure that readers could access data from original transcripts (2007, p. 97).

Triangulation

Although some authors (Flick, 1998; Silverman, 2000; Richardson 2001) dispute the need to search for a single ‘truth’, an approach was used to attempt to ensure each participant’s ‘truth’ was told. Following the fifth interview, participants’ stories were written, based on the interview transcripts of all interviews. These were shared with the participants in advance of our final interview, to enable them to adjust and amend aspects that they felt were not accurate – some minor adjustments were made by two participants, but others confirmed their story as presented. Access to all transcripts was also offered, although none of the participants chose to request this.

3.5 Analysis of data

Miles and Huberman's (1994) recommended a multi-step process of data analysis: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Building on this, Wellington's three stages if data analysis were:

1. 'Data are collated, summarised, coded and sorted out into themes, clusters and categories.'
2. 'Data are organised and assembled, then 'displayed' in pictorial, diagrammatic or visual form [to allow] the researcher to conceptualise the data leading towards interpretation and conclusion drawing.'
3. Data are interpreted and given meaning. Themes are reviewed, patterns and regularities are sought, and units of data are compared and contrasted. (Wellington, 2015, p. 261)

Stage 1 - coding

In order to collate, summarise and code the data gathered in interviews, or Wellington's first stage of data analysis, interview transcripts and documentary data were coded using aspects of Wenger's CoPs. I sought out statements in interviews and documentary evidence that provided evidence that the trainees were participants in CoPs as seen by their mutual engagement in actions whose meanings are negotiated together through mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (see Appendix 8). This allowed me to make comparisons at other points during each participants' own training, but also with other participants' at the same point. I decided not to use computer software such as NVivo as a tool to support data analysis, for a similar reason that I generally transcribed all recordings myself; the process of revisiting the data and being immersed within it, enabled me to 'know' the data in greater depth. The 'imaginative thinking [and] conception of codes' (Wellington, 2015, p. 273) occurred during transcription (see example in Appendix 7). This also allowed for *a posteriori* categories (Wellington, 2015, p. 268) to emerge from the data.

Stage 2 – presenting data as stories

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Webster and Mertova (2007) suggested that a narrative sketch can be used to present the data as a whole to the reader. This avoids the reduction of stories of personal experience being summarised in a graph or table of results. Connelly

and Clandinin (1990) also supported the idea that narrative inquiry method makes use of description and the features of a story – scene, plot, character, time, points of view and events (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Similarly, narrative researchers Webster and Mertova suggested that: 'The feature common to all stories, which gives them their aptitude for illuminating real life situations, is their narrative structure' (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 19). As such, I chose to present my data as stories which included critical events. An example of one of the participants' stories is seen in Appendix 3.

Stage 3 – identifying themes, comparing and contrasting

Narrative analysis aims 'to 'uncover the common themes or plots in the data. Analysis is carried out using hermeneutic techniques for noting underlying patterns across examples of stories' (Polkingthorne, 1988, p. 177). This is supported by Webster and Mertova (2007), who presented an approach to analysis of critical events:

1. ***Critical event*** – an event is selected because of its unique, illustrative and confirmatory nature.
2. It is compared to ***like events*** – or those with the same context, method or resources as the critical event, allowing for confirmation of the experience of the critical event.
3. ***Other events*** are also considered – these are further events that takes place at the same time as critical and like events. (Webster and Mertova (2007, p.79).

Webster and Mertova's argument to support this approach ensured that the issues that may not be reported through more traditional research methods could be revealed through this approach to analysis of unplanned and unanticipated critical events (2007, p. 85). As Polkingthorne said, 'In narrative research… a finding is significant if it is important' (Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 176) and as such, it was important to ensure significant themes were not overlooked.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) consider the quality of narrative data to be influenced by two criteria; 'broadening' and 'burrowing'. Broadening is a form or generalisation, whereas the meaning of the event in terms of the impact it has on future practice is considered through 'burrowing'. As such, full transcripts were used alongside the stories in data analysis to ensure that 'like' and 'other' events (Webster and Mertova, 2007) were not lost while stories were analysed to consider generalisable themes and the impact critical events may

have on future practice – or ‘broadening’ and ‘burrowing’ in Connelly and Clandidin’s (1990) terms. In my findings and analysis, I have both ‘broadened’ and ‘burrowed’. My participants’ views about being a TA and training to teach in CoPs are presented thematically. I have attempted to retain individual voices through direct quotes from interview transcripts and documentary evidence that illustrate these themes. When considering identity development, a ‘burrowing’ approach is utilised.

4. Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

My participants' experiences of being TAs are discussed to support my understanding of what the TA role brings to the teacher role; their views of their place in a community and how this contributed to their professional development during training will be considered allowing me to reflect on their changing professional identity; and throughout this in a more retrospective sense, their understanding of the impact of the TA role on their developing teacher identity will be discussed. The theory of CoP will be considered to enable me to understand my participants' perspectives about their place in and learning from various communities during their training.

4.2 Teaching Assistants' perceptions of primary TA roles, responsibilities, training and professional identities.

4.2.1 What is the role of the TA?

Initial elicitation of their understanding of the TA role allowed me to begin to consider how being a TA had informed teacher identity. As noted widely in research (Mansaray, 2006; Johnson, 2018, Clarke, 2019), there is lack of clarity over what a TA does (Blatchford et al, 2009a); there is no definitive list or job description which all TAs adhere to, and each participant's experience differed. The hugely influential DISS report's (Blatchford et al., 2009) findings and follow up research (Russell et al., 2013, Sharples et al., 2015) were in the main focussed on the impact that TAs had on pupil outcomes, however, the 'pivotal' role (Mansaray, 2006) that TAs play in schools perhaps encompasses what one of my participants described as 'menial tasks'. During their teacher training, it became clear that menial tasks somehow exemplified or 'reified' (Wenger, 1998) what being a TA was as they revisited these on many occasions. Wenger argued that this 'reification', or the process of giving form or 'thingness' to experience, enabled a focus for the negotiation of meaning or understanding about 'what to do' (Wenger, 1998, p. 59). He also argued that 'reification must be appropriated into a local process in order to become meaningful' (Wenger, 1998, p. 60). I argue that this local negotiation of what different TAs do in different schools is important to understanding my participants' stories. Unpicking, or burrowing into my participants' experiences of what being a TA meant to them allowed me to consider their changing professional identity and for them to negotiate their membership of communities

(Wenger, 1998), understanding what it meant to them to be a TA and how this might impact on their developing teacher identity.

'Cutting and sticking' and 'chopping and slicing'

My participants acknowledged that menial cutting and sticking tasks were part of their role. Katie argued that 'I know that TAs aren't all about chopping and slicing…but why has the teacher got to do the chopping and slicing?' highlighting the idea that there are jobs that need doing, and someone has to do them. In Laura's experience, whoever was less busy at the time would cut resources up or create displays. Jayne suggested that she felt laminating was 'quite a stress reliever'; she saw this an enjoyable TA task that she hoped as a teacher she could continue to do. This perhaps supports Slater and Glazeley's view that the TA-teacher relationship should be about 'mutuality rather than difference and hierarchy' (2018, p. 15), but arguably could also imply the teacher has lack of clarity over where the line between teacher and TA lies, and around their own responsibility to deploy TAs effectively (Blatchford et al., 2009a).

My participants also discussed other aspects of their role which were not directly pedagogical. Displays were often mentioned in discussions about what TAs did in literature (Kerry, 2005; Fraser and Meadows, 2008), but amongst my participants, who did displays in the classroom was dependent on individual teacher and TA enjoyment of the task; both Jayne and Nicole reported some teachers allocated this to TAs because they were not interested in doing these themselves. When 'accidents' (Fraser and Meadows, 2008) occurred in Laura's or Nicole's classes, mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998) dictated who should resolve the situation. Laura said:

> 'I mean we like, when we have accidents because we still have them, in our class we sort of divide between you or I… whichever one is more free, so she'll be like 'No I'll do it, you're busy, I will deal with it,' or she'll be like teaching, I will be like 'I'll do it then'. I don't, I see myself as [teacher]'s backup… we are a team, we work together, we share out tasks you know, like so if she says 'Will you just cut out that, will you put that up?', that is fine, I am there to help really, in any way with the children giving them extra support on her…what she thinks, yeah, I know… we are a team…'

In Katie's school and perhaps unusually as this is not mentioned in literature, TAs were expected to take on lunchtime supervision. This was not something mentioned by any other participants either, so this appeared to be particular to this school although in other schools some TAs do take on additional, and separately paid, lunchtime supervision duties. This was interesting in that it meant that for Katie, this was something that she understood that TAs generally might be asked to do.

To support this, the categorisation task data (appendix 9) showed that tasks that could be seen as 'cutting and sticking' or 'display' type tasks (Butt and Lowe, 2012; Eyres and Cable, 2004; Kerry, 2005; Fraser and Meadows, 2008; Mansaray 2006) were generally considered by all participants as tasks that *both* TAs and teachers would undertake. There were three anomalies; Laura initially felt that clearing away after lessons and organising and making resources were tasks for TAs only, but when we revisited this task later on, she felt that both TAs and teachers would do this; she had been a voluntary TA at the outset so had perhaps her teacher had felt it easier to ask her to do such tasks without feeling the need to participate in them herself. Nicole initially felt displays were a task for both, but by the end of the course, felt that TAs should do these. She had spoken about teachers she had worked with as a TA not asking her to do displays which resulted in them not being changed; this perhaps indicated that in her experience, displays were not important. Katie initially said that both TAs and teachers prepare the room for lessons, but later categorised this as a teacher task. This could indicate a change in understanding about the pedagogical importance of setting up the classroom, however, also could relate to her self-confessed need to be 'in control'. Due to Katie's year of UQT during the training, she perhaps also had a better understanding of the teacher role, and as such classified displays as a TA task at the end of training. Importantly, she was the first participant to accept that she (as the teacher) had to prioritise some tasks over others.

Looking at how these tasks were allocated through the lens of CoPs begins to illustrate what being a TA in their school's CoP meant to my participants. Mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire define participation in a CoP Wenger (1998). Laura's, Katie's and LE's 'cutting and sticking' all contributed to community maintenance (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). Participation within a CoP however does not simply mean carrying out a

prescribed activity, it involves negotiation, renegotiation in different contexts and reflection on motives (Wenger, 1998): Laura and her teacher decided who would respond to accidents in the moment; Katie carried out lunchtime supervision because this was what happened at her school; and Jayne and Nicole willingly took on the task of putting up displays because it helped some teachers who were not as confident to do displays themselves.

Deployment - interventions

A common theme in literature is that TAs are often deployed to work with lower attaining children (e.g. Blatchford, 2009a; Eyres et al, 2004), and it is argued that this is counterintuitive given that the TA is generally less qualified to teach pupils who arguably require a more skilled teacher. For my participants, evidence showed that TAs working with the lower attainers was the norm; Laura said that she worked with small groups and 'I am usually with the lower ability' (as seen by Blatchford et al., 2009a). She felt that in her school, it was usually the TAs who 'nurture' lower ability children. Nicole also found herself working with lower attainers;

> 'I think it depends with which teacher you work with because … obviously the split in there, from the ability wise, I have found myself like honing in towards the lower ability, supporting them, I mean they just sit there bless them, there's two that are very newly arrived EAL… yeah and during inputs and stuff they just are like floating off, and it is like, 'concentrate, concentrate', so I so like in lesson support, and like translating, breaking things down, and obviously as you get further up the school, like the vocab that used, and obviously they don't always understand it, so the teacher explains, and then I feel like sometimes I am having to go, simplify it down for them, to actually or they are just sitting there like what, what are we doing?'

All participants discussed their involvement in intervention sessions designed to support groups of lower attaining children; this was clearly seen to be a key part of the TA role despite research showing that as far back as at least 2009 (Blatchford et al., 2009a) that it was not considered best practice to allocate TAs to the children who need most support. At Laura's school, different key stages managed interventions in different ways – one working cross age phase focussed groups, the other using TAs for groups from each class at a time. It was clear that in her TA role, 'her' interventions were carried out generally with lower ability

children who were taken out of the classroom. TAs in Katie's school would take children from different classes in the year group (in most cohorts this school had three classes) for interventions, meaning that in-class TA support was limited. At times the interventions occurred in the corner of the classroom with one or two children at a time, but with three of four children at time, the TA 'will take them to another room because of…you know, just because they can be somewhere quiet.' Interventions in Laura's and Katie's schools included lower attaining children who were identified at the start of the year and remained in the group consistently, alongside focussed interventions to address specific learning needs during the year. As a TA, Nicole had various English intervention groups that were her responsibility to manage. She made use of various published schemes as suggested by Sharples et al., (2015) with static groups of children and feedback to class teachers only occurred at the end of the term, perhaps reflecting views from literature which suggest time for communication is limited (Butt and Lowe, 2005; McVittie, 2005; Blatchford 2009a; Radford et al., 2014; Lehane, 2016). A 'bus stop' approach in which TAs and teachers noted misconceptions in whole class teaching, and TAs then responded to these in the afternoon with different children each day was used in her previous school, and she preferred this. As she said, 'Some of the schemes are good, but I don't see how they quite marry up [with what children are learning in the whole class sessions]'.

My participants recognised interventions as a key aspect of the TA role as recommended by Rose (2000) and understood that how these were implemented differed in different schools; they were all engaged in joint, negotiated enterprise and contributed to ways of doing things within their school community (Wenger, 1998). Wenger noted that negotiated enterprise does not necessarily mean all members of the community agree with what is decided; so Nicole's reflection that she preferred an alternative approach to interventions did not mean she was not part of the community.

Allocation

What could be termed *allocation* rather than *deployment* was something that my participants discussed in detail, but something that is seldom detailed in literature. My participants explained how TAs were allocated to classes within the various schools in which they had worked. As they became teachers themselves, based on their own experience,

they carried preconceptions about TA allocations to classes and this resulted in them having expectations about the TA support they may receive once they were qualified as teachers. This reflects ideas in literature which suggest ideas pre-training persist (Androusou and Tsafos, 2018) and perhaps also illustrates the view that ideas about professional communities shape teacher identity (Goodson and Cole, 1994; Shepens et al. 2009). In schools that Laura, Jake and Jayne worked in, all teachers generally appeared to have a TA working with their class and some had more than one TA if a child had a specific one-to-one TA allocated to them. Similarly, Nicole's school generally had a TA in most classes, but by the time Nicole was employed as a UQT in Y6, her hopes for support from a TA had diminished:

> We are the only year group with no TAs! We were given no TAs so I said, 'I am an unqualified teacher, I have got no help, zero support'. J [teacher next door] is a really experienced teacher, the lady who works Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, she is an ex-head teacher anyway so she has just had children and come back part-time, so as a team we all said that we would like some support, so school agreed to get us an apprentice, so we got this apprentice, I didn't get her. They have got her downstairs. So I was like, 'okay' [*resigned*]. Still not helping me!

How and where TAs were allocated across the school seemed to be very important to both Katie and Nicole once they were employed as UQTs and can be seen as critical events that changed their worldview (Webster and Mertova, 2007) and perhaps began to challenge their own view of their place within the CoP. Katie's school was undergoing changes to the structure within the school and Katie explained that TAs had been asked to plan amongst themselves and with teachers where they would work; this appeared to suggest that this was a joint, negotiated enterprise (Wenger, 1998). However, this did not materialise. A year later, allocation of TAs across the school was revisited, and on this occasion, staff were not asked about their preferences by the SLT, and were also not told until very late in the summer term where TAs and teachers would be working from September. This lack of exchange of information (Wenger, 1998, p. 74) seemed to contribute to Katie feeling less committed to the school long term. By the end of my study, of the four who were in teaching posts with responsibility for a class, all but Nicole were working regularly with a TA. Nicole returned to this a number of times in her final interview and there was a clear sense of disappointment when she talked about this; she felt the situation had left her unsupported. 'Everyone's [all other classes/year groups] got one, in fact everyone else has

got two; every year group has got two…and these [the Y6 cohort that she was teaching] are the most neediest [sic] year ever'. She felt disappointed about the expectations she had had of the SLT in the school; based on her experience she was expecting to be allocated a TA, and because of this, she felt the needs of the children in her class were not being met, and she herself 'miss[ed] all of the little things' that a TA might have supported her with – alluding again to 'menial tasks' that might have saved time. Although Wenger (1998) argued that engaged diversity and conflict within a CoP was part of mutual engagement, Nicole was beginning to feel that she was being given limited support and had little opportunity to contribute to the way things were done in the school.

Covering

All of the employed participants reported that they often covered for teachers in their absence at both short notice or planned in advance, for example for PPA cover (as in Kerry, 2005; Russell et al., 2013) and perhaps as a pragmatic remainder from the workforce agreement (DfES, 2003). Jayne had been working as a volunteer TA and did not cover for absent teaching staff. Laura covered teachers' PPA time on a regular basis and said this was because she 'knows them [the children] and is a safe pair of hands'. Nicole said that she thought that 'rather than them getting supply in now, they pull on us [TAs] more'.

Jake's experience of covering classes changed during his training. Early on in the course he reflected on a critical event:

> 'but then the year two teacher was off for two days, a Monday and a Tuesday, and without me knowing, the year one teacher and the reception teacher and the year two teacher all went to SLT and said well I am perfectly capable of covering a class for two days a week, so let me do it.'

However, half-way through the course following a placement elsewhere, he said:

> 'Coming back here, I have found myself being able to cope with things better than I did before, now I am dealing with whole classes. Being able to cover different classes without really thinking about it.'

It could be argued through a CoP lens that covering for absent teachers is a sign of mutual engagement and joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998), but also when thinking about identity, it provides TAs with the opportunity to 'play the role' (Danielewicz, 2001).

TA-teacher relationships

Early on in the interviews my participants, as in Lehane's (2016) research, raised the idea that every TA was different and every teacher was different, so specific relationships developed differently, but that the relationship between a teacher and a TA was pivotal to effective working practice (Barkham, 2008; Collins and Simco, 2006; Lehane, 2016). This diversity within the community of TAs and of teachers is part of mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998) but presents challenges when considering the training of TAs, and how TAs become teachers.

Jayne considered the TA-teacher relationship to be very important and noted that understanding a TA's prior experience was perhaps part of the relationship building process which then determined who would carry out certain tasks. She said: 'It is finding the balance…I know in some classrooms the teacher sort of expects the TAs to do display boards, but I absolutely love doing display boards…'

Jake however, felt that what the TA does 'depends on the teacher' and on the experience of the teacher:

> 'I have had the opportunity to work with a lot of different teachers, and a lot of different teaching styles. So the role of the TA is very much based on how the teacher views themselves…if you get a teacher who's older, or more experienced and been doing it 20, 30 years, they tend to do everything with the class – all the filing, all the display boards. And then the small one-to-one groups – that is what the TA role is for them. [However, with a more recently qualified teacher], I have a lot more of an active role. They will want me to help them with the children…they will do by ability…I help with the teaching. So I think it really depends on how the teacher wants the TA's support, than the actual role.'

My participants shared their view of the differences between TAs, which can perhaps be seen as different 'levels' of TAs (Blatchford et al., 2009a). Nicole said, 'I think you get some really good TAs, and I think some not so good TAs…levels of TAs. You get somebody really experienced; well, they don't need to be told what to do'.

LE offered an interesting view on TAs from a slightly removed perspective as a volunteer TA rather than one who was actually employed to carry out the role. She noted that:

> ‘there are different TAs. I have noticed you will have a TA that is very much to do with the children, and they are there to support the children in the lessons, and to take on activities, and then you will have TAs that are in the classroom, may be more focussed on getting that display done, or making sure that pile of books is marked.’

In considering this further, Jayne suggested:

> I think it is a mixture. I think probably as well to do with experience, because you get a lot of TAs that come in from being parents that just naturally… and then you get the TAs like myself that have trained specifically, and I think that can make differences as well… Yeah, I am not saying that one or the other is bad, it is just interesting to see that there is that difference...

She felt that who did what depended on the relationship between the TA and the teacher, and similarly to Jake, on what the teacher wanted the TA to do. Early on as a new volunteer TA at her school, Jayne was working alongside a more experienced and paid TA in the classroom. This TA had been quick to point out ‘we always do it like this’ and was ‘out of the door at lunchtime and again as soon as the children left the building at the end of the day’. Jayne presented this as not being an ideal situation and at a later point, she discussed that this TA was missing out on the ‘gossip’ that Jayne felt was part of building relationships as noted by Wenger (1998) sharing gossip is part of building a shared repertoire.

Laura worked in a school that she saw as ‘a family’, and frequently returned to the idea of the school community being ‘one big family’. She felt that across the school, relationships were good, and appeared to have close relationships with the teachers with whom she worked; relationships appeared to be a key part of the community in the school aligning with Wenger’s (1998) view about the social aspects of CoPs. In her comments about the relationship between the TA and the teacher, it was apparent that for Laura, being made to feel an equal was key to forming a positive relationship, and that a positive relationship was important to ensure children did not take advantage by ‘playing one off against the other’ if a negative relationship was apparent. This could be interpreted as mutual accountability (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). Laura said that ‘I think [teachers] have to have that relationship with [their] TA where [they] are not going to expect them to do the lesser jobs just because of their job title’. In her class, she felt that the relationship with her teacher was very balanced, and this has been the case throughout her career as a TA; ‘we just sort of bounce off each

other… I think you have just got to have that sort of environment where you know that you [as the TA] are respected'.

To summarise, all of my participants who completed QTS spoke about relationships within schools and saw the building of relationships to be an important part of them being a member of their school's community, to the extent that some saw it as almost a family. The did not refer to the negative and potentially exclusionary language in literature that suggests teachers 'use' TAs (Veck, 2009, p. 53; Dunne et al., 2008a p. 245) and they described differences as well as similarities within the community (Wenger, 1998). In also considering the idea of 'levels' of TAs and different teachers, it was evident that they recognised the limitations of a 'one size fits all' approach to TA/teacher relationships and as such there were differences to what teachers might expect their TA to do as part of their role.

4.2.2 What is the TAs place within the CoP?

Wenger argued that while learning can take place outside CoPs, 'there are few more urgent tasks than to design social infrastructures that foster learning' (Wenger, 1998, p. 225). 'Learning is fundamentally experiential, and fundamentally social [; it] transforms our identities and constitutes trajectories of participation [that connect] our past and our future in a process of individual and collective belonging' (Wenger, 1998, p. 227). As such, I will consider some reified aspects of learning within the participants' CoPs; 'official markers of transition' (Wenger, 1998, p. 151) such as qualifications but also processes that take place in schools which my participants experienced while engaging in the constant work of negotiating their changing identity (Wenger, 1998, p. 151).

Qualifications

Katie made an interesting point about TA qualifications;

> 'The qualifications thing…we did essays on this [during Level 4/5]. It is about being relevant, and being up to date…do I think that they should [have a qualification]…? I don't know Becky…I don't know'.

While Katie viewed qualifications to be important, she went on to say that the content of the qualification seemed less important than the idea that 'you are willing to work at something…that you are prepared to put the effort in'. Others implied from a different perspective that what was taught and learnt during the qualification was less important than getting a qualification to enable them to be seen to have reached a certain level. This aligns with Wenger's (1998) view that 'getting your level' can be seen as an important feature of professional identity change. There is currently no national requirement for TAs to have a Level 3 qualification (NCS, 2020); it seemed that some schools did require this (NCS, 2020) and therefore possibly made an assumption that 'how to be a TA' was embedded within the Level 3 qualification, but other schools did not, presumably accepting that applicants for TA posts possessed no previous understanding about what the role entailed. As such, I was interested then to consider how school-based training of TAs (Blatchford et al, 2009a), 'on the job training' (Dunne et al, 2008b) and experiential learning (Syrnyk, 2018) filled the gaps that had been alluded to in the DISS report (Blatchford et al., 2009a), particularly in relation to appraisal.

Appraisal

None of my participants had been provided with any initial TA training; induction comprised of standard whole staff induction including health and safety and how to use the IT systems despite recommendations that this occurs (Russell et al., 2013). Given that schools generally have rigorous appraisal processes in place for teaching staff, my participants reported variable approaches to TA appraisal within their schools reflecting literature which shows that CPD for TAs goes much beyond in-service training (Cajkler et al., 2007; Blatchford et al., 2009, Dunne et al., 2008b). In Laura's school, TAs did have an appraisal process. In reviews with her line manager, she considered targets from the previous year and new targets were co-created. Evidence of the courses or in-house training that had taken place or could support in the future was also discussed. As a volunteer TA, appraisal was not part of LE's expectation in her role, however, she did feel that TA appraisal was a good idea and later in her training as a soon-to-be teacher in the school, observations of her practice were carried out. Jake's school did have an appraisal process for TAs, but for him, this was always focused on his aim to gain QTS, so he felt this meant that he was allowed to formulate targets that would help achieve this goal, rather than contribute to his role as a TA.

Katie's first TA role was a brief period in a secondary school. She said:

> 'I was never observed. I was there for eight months and they knew that I had no experience, so why would you not come and see me?... [I wanted] them to say to me how I could get better, how I could do things differently. And they said, 'Well, you should have just asked'. The fact that I would have to ask to be checked on doesn't sit well with me.'

Katie recognised her own levels of competence and wanted to receive help to understand her role further (Wenger, 1998), but felt she was not able to ask for this, perhaps indicating a lack of engagement with the CoP in that school reflecting Johnson's (2018) view that TAs with access to training felt more integrated in school communities. She left this post after less than a year citing this lack of support with professional development as a reason for her resignation. Wenger (1998) might label this mutual accountability and suggest member in this community did not share a common understanding of what matters. In Katie's later primary school TA role, she had an appraisal at the end of her first year, but she felt 'that it was a kind of rushed thing; "Oh my god, we need to fill one of these in!"' and said that she

had not had one since aligning with Skipp and Hopwood's (2019) recognition that there was limited time for TA training. However, Katie did feel that she was being watched or observed in some sense; 'I know that they are listening to us', recognising that having been offered a job as an unqualified teacher (a position that Katie did not apply for and which apparently had not been advertised), the SLT would have had some evidence upon which to base their offer. In Nicole's school observations of TAs happened alongside observations of the teacher, but rather than observers feeding back directly to TAs, reflections on their practice would be shared with the class teacher. Arguably this perhaps should be how observations in school should be carried out and perhaps reflecting McVittie's (2005) recommendation that TAs needed training that supported them to build on their existing skills, but Nicole did not suggest this rationale was explained to the TAs in the school.

Training/CPD/staff meetings

The categorisation task showed that my participants felt that both TAs and teachers should engage in CPD reflecting Johnson's (2018) view that TAs with access to training felt more integrated in school communities, but interview data showed that despite feeling TAs *should* engage in training, this was not always the case. Training happened 'along the way' in Laura's experience of being a TA (Syrnyk, 2018; Dunne et al., 2008b); in her school TAs could ask for training that they were interested in undertaking. In-service training (INSET) days in Laura's school were for all staff, but TAs did not tend to attend staff meetings – although Laura did suggest they could if they wanted to, supporting Cajkler et al.'s (2007) suggestion that TA training was uncoordinated. The 'patchy' approach was in evidence in all participants' schools; in Katie's school, a voluntary approach also seemed to be in place - teachers undertook coaching which was also available for TAs, but no TAs took up the offer of this CPD. Although Jayne was working as a voluntary TA, she had specifically chosen the school in which she volunteered because the head teacher said he would be able to offer her training during the time she was volunteering - she theoretically had access to training. However, when asked in a later interview, Jayne said that as far as she was aware, CPD for TAs did not happen in the school. As a volunteer TA, she did not attend staff meetings, and also felt that other TAs in the school did not attend either. TAs in Jake's school were encouraged to attend courses, but it was clear that financial restrictions were placed on CPD for TAs. Laura suggested this was also the case in her school when some TAs had requested

to attend a course that teachers had just all completed and were told there was currently not enough money to finance this. Perhaps differently to other participants though, TAs in Jake's and Nicole's schools did attend INSET days in school alongside teachers, and attendance by TAs at staff meetings (as seen in Blatchford et al., 2009a) appeared to be fairly common, however Jake explained that TAs usually did not contribute to these. Nicole also spoke about PPA time saying that, 'TAs are allowed to join in PPA time…and TAs can go to that'. Her choice of words was quite telling here – both indicating a hierarchical system and also implying that TAs, including herself did not generally choose to join in with PPA. Unusually, in Nicole's school, an online CPD programme was also used for teachers and TAs. For TAs, their class teacher 'ticked off' training that had been undertaken. It appeared that this was generally training decided upon by the SLT as part of what the whole school was adopting rather than specific training for individuals based on their own needs. However, the appraisal process was seen was 'just a tick box' exercise by most in Nicole's school.

TAs place within a CoP

To summarise this evidence relating to training it is useful to consider how this supports the TAs place within CoPs. Johnson's (2018) view that TAs with access to training felt more integrated in school communities, aligns with that of Wenger who said that 'engagement in practice gives us certain experiences of participation, and what our communities pay attention to reifies us as participants' (Wenger, 1998, p. 150). Most TAs were given no clear expectations about what their role involved in any form of TA induction, appraisal of training, supporting evidence from literature about TA CPD. Significant aspects of mutual engagement – how dilemmas are responded to, exchange of information and community maintenance, and joint enterprise – mutual accountability, negotiated enterprise, local response to external influences - are 'missed' when training is patchy, resulting in TAs having a less central position than teachers within a schools' CoP.

4.2.3 What do TAs learn about teaching from being a TA?

Planning and assessment

Early on in the course, lesson planning was seen as something that many of my participants felt nervous about when anticipating the differences between the teacher and TA roles. At this point, the categorisation task showed that all but one saw planning as a teacher task. It was mentioned as something still to learn by all of my participants implying that this was recognised as something that TAs did not do, but also that they recognised this was something that would be expected of them as a teacher; their participation in a school CoP had meant that they understood this as part of the shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998) of teachers within the community – something different that they did, but TAs did not do, reflecting mutuality of engagement (Wenger, 1998). However, perhaps their nervousness about planning was because they did not see lesson plans (as in Lehane, 2016). Katie noted there was an additional aspect to planning; 'eventually when I do planning, I've got to plan for the TA and what do I want the TA to do', showing that her understanding of the teacher role clearly involved deployment of TAs. Nicole appeared to be most confident in terms of planning at the outset of training; she was the only participant in the categorisation task who saw planning as a task for both TAs and teachers; in a previous TA job in a secondary school, she had regularly 'been left to [her] own devices' in terms of planning and marking with small groups. However, longer term planning and coverage was something she had not had experience of at the start of training and this was something she identified herself as an area she needed to learn more about.

Assessment was seen by some as managed differently by teachers and TAs. Jayne described being a TA in a 'team' in which she felt lucky to work so closely with the teacher, 'we were a team…I mean she did the tracking and putting the graphs together and all that kind of thing' but in terms formative assessment within lessons, both took on this role. Nicole, Jake, Laura and Katie also recognised that summative assessment and tracking were something that teachers did, but not TAs. My participants knew from their work with teachers that assessment was something that would need to be addressed as they became teachers themselves but expressed concerns about doing it themselves. This showed they had an understanding of the discourses, actions and concepts relating to different members within their CoP (Wenger, 1998), but also that they felt nervous about this aspect of teaching.

Differences in responsibility for formative and summative assessment tasks were seen in the categorisation tasks; generally TAs and teachers were seen to be responsible for marking work and preparing children for assessments, but writing reports, tracking pupil progress, analysing test date and parents' evenings were all seen to be teacher tasks.

Behaviour management

The management of children's behaviour seemed to be very clearly the responsibility of all adults in the school, rather than just teachers supporting Blatchford et al.'s (2009a) research which showed that TAs have a positive effect on behaviour management. Data from the categorisation task showed that all participants felt that the management of class behaviour was a task both TAs and teachers carried out. It was rare that my participants mentioned behaviour management during interviews; it was not raised as a target during training for any of them and when spoken about was generally a passing reference rather than an identification of a critical incident (Webster and Mertova, 2007). Nicole felt that her confidence in behaviour management was a result of her previous experience as a secondary school TA, and also her understanding of making use of different behaviour management policies at different schools. She said: 'Behaviour management for me is probably the main one and isn't really an area I've really had to think about during my training because of my experience as a TA'. Katie also reflected on her TA experience as contributing to her confidence in managing behaviour in a challenging school; 'If I can manage behaviour in this school, I think I can work anywhere!'. Jake also noted that as a TA, he had learnt a lot from his home school:

> '…using different behaviour management techniques. Having been a one-to-one for a child with behaviour issues, being able to use all my knowledge of being a TA, my years of experience has helped me build up relationships. It is all there, and I can bring it out as and when needed.'

Other features of being a teacher

It became clear during interviews though that what could perhaps be seen as actions, policies, rules and practices were not the only aspects of being a TA in a CoP which supported my participants' transition into teaching – there were less tangible aspects that also required consideration. Blatchford et al. (2009) acknowledged that their DISS data

could not effectively consider the less tangible individual characteristics of support staff, and similarly it was difficult to consider this in my data. However, some themes arose: responsibility; knowing the children, resilience and initiative.

Responsibility

When considering the differences between teachers and TAs in her school, Laura said that, 'I don't ever feel there's a line between teachers and TAs, until it comes to the responsibility', aligning with Wilson and Bedford (2008) and Furlong and Maynard (1995) who saw the ultimate responsibility for children's progress to belong to the teacher. However, she also felt that at times, 'we're [the TAs] are just as responsible, like when it comes to inhalers and things'. Developing this idea of responsibility, Laura felt that if she was uncertain about something, she was able to ask her teacher because, 'she's the final line'. To support this, in Katie's early interviews at the point that she had just taken on an unqualified teaching role, she reported that the key difference in the way she was doing things was that 'the buck stops with me'. She presented this positively; that she could teaching things whatever way she wanted to, but also recognised that she had 'got to get the best out of them' or was responsible for their progress in a way she had not been as a TA. She said;

> 'I suppose last year [as a TA], if it wasn't working, I could say to someone, 'can…?'. I could even pass the buck and say, 'I don't want to do that, I am not confident in doing that,' or something like that. Now, there is no room for that. I can go and ask someone for support, but it is taking ownership. I am responsible'.

LE also mentioned responsibility as she anticipated her first teaching post 'the overall responsibility. It comes down to you as a teacher, which is a little bit nerve-wracking.' This suggests she had reached stage 5 of Furlong and Maynard's (1995) stages of becoming a teacher. Nicole had the view that the main difference between the TA and teacher roles was the level of responsibility that came with being a teacher; during her training, she did not feel her teaching had changed much, but the difference was that she had taken responsibility for things like assessment, SEN and risk assessments. This had been something she had not appreciated as a TA and found this quite hard once she became a UQT; On reflecting on her 'story' of teacher training, the thing that Nicole was keen that wouldn't be missed out was the fact that she 'underestimated the jump'. She said that

> ‘It is not like as a TA that I didn’t know the work that the teacher was doing, I don’t know, I knew they were doing it, but I just thought that it wasn’t as hard.’ She noted, ‘I think [it’s] the responsibility. I knew that I would get a lot of responsibility, but I didn't think I would get it all. Which I have got given. And I don't know why I thought I wouldn't have it all, maybe because I am an unqualified teacher, and I don't know’.

Knowing the children better than the teacher

Some TAs would argue that TAs know the children better than the teacher (Lehane, 2016, p. 12). However, this was not something that most of my participants explicitly mentioned. Laura was the only participant who perhaps began to consider this idea – she felt as a TA she could ‘see when they do progress and when they take off with something’, but she went on to say that she supposed teachers still got to celebrate this, but ‘usually it’s the TA that puts all that intervention in place for it to take off’. Generally, though, my participants talked about their own individual close relationships with children but did not make comparisons with teacher-pupil relationships in their school. For example, Jake presented ‘how I am with the kids’ as a positive aspect of his time as a TA, and felt that this was something he would miss when he becomes a teacher. He also said that he was glad that they could ‘come up to him with anything that they maybe wouldn’t go to a teacher for’. He recognised this was because of his involvement in the before- and after-school clubs that he was involved in running as a TA. He said that he had ‘got to know the children really well, and they are comfortable with me’. When considering his future role as teacher though, he anticipated there would be ‘more structure…more of a boundary’.

Resilience

Resilience is a well-researched concept within the field of teacher identity (for example Day and Kington, 2008; Glazzard, 2016), and while very hard to pinpoint specific examples of how a trainee teacher can develop resilience, one thing that my participants discussed was the expectation from their schools that they would be able to step in at short notice or carry out tasks with little preparation; they were adaptable - an attribute that Dunne et al. found in their research to be ‘essential to the role’ (2008a, p. 242). In fact, research (Blatchford et al., 2009a) cites one of the key challenges faced in TA deployment is a lack of time for

teachers and TAs to plan together. As such, an unwritten part of the TA role is the need to be flexible and resilient (Twiselton and Goepel, 2018).

Nicole frequently and increasingly found herself being asked at very short notice to be in another classroom or to be part of things she had not previously been told about, for example 'go to the other classroom for a bit', 'we are going out [on a trip] tomorrow,' or later in the course, 'quite a lot more cover work and getting thrown about school at lot more'. Nicole also demonstrated the adaptability Dunne et al., (2008b) suggested was a TA characteristic – she reported being able to quickly adapt to situations when 'the teacher was pulled out last minute, so we just winged a topic lesson'; During his final placement, Jake reflected that as a TA he had worked with lots of different teachers, and this had meant that he was also able to adapt well to different approaches he saw on placements, particularly during his extending placement in which he was in a job-share class so had two teachers and two mentors. He felt that understanding of teachers working in different ways had arguably prepared him well to be adaptable and flexible himself, as well as enabling him to learn from different experienced teachers. Jake presented himself as someone who planned carefully - by his own admission 'organised [and] a bit OCD'. He reflected that:

> 'it does help with being a TA because you are used to things cropping up that are just…completely random. You deal with it there and then - you build up a bank of 'that doesn't matter' or 'actually that does need sorting right now''.

It is not possible from this study to determine whether this ability to work flexibly was a pre-existing skill, but it was clear that TAs have lots of practice at working in this way during their time as TAs. When reflecting at the end of training, Jake pointed out that his ability to react quickly was part of his TA knowledge – 'just come in and do this in 10 seconds! Yes, fine!'. He felt very confident to plan very quickly in his head because this was something he had done every day as a TA. This confidence seemed to be at odds with Jake's intrinsic character, yet he found within lessons, he could very quickly think on his feet and change plans and he saw this as something he had learned as a TA.

The exception to the idea that resilience is part of being a TA is perhaps Laura who felt that her ability to be resilient had improved during the teacher training course rather than in her time as a TA – she said:

> ‘because at my [home] school I didn't have to be resilient. It was very much like a comfort blanket. A safety net, I can fall back on them. But here I have had no one to fall back on so I have sort of had to build a wall and sometimes say, ‘no that is not happening’ and have the door as a barrier to say, ‘that might happen out there, but it is not going to happen in here.’

However, Laura was the participant who most often spoke about her home school as a ‘family’; relationships were very close so perhaps as a TA asking for and giving help, responding to dilemmas and negotiated enterprise (Wenger, 1998) in challenging situations that might be seen to require resilience was something that was so embedded, Laura did not recognise that she had been resilient.

Initiative

A recurring theme was that in my participants’ view, good TAs use their initiative reflecting Wilson and Bedford’s (2008) and Butt and Lowe’s (2012) view that this was a key aspect of the TA role. One of Nicole’s mentors had noticed that Nicole did ‘a lot of things, just because [she knew] that they need doing’. When reflecting on this, Nicole said, ‘I think it is coming from a TA role, if you’ve got a pile of books just sat there, you just sit and mark them.’ When considering the TA role from a teacher perspective, Nicole spoke about a TA she thought she would be allocated in the future; ‘she uses her initiative, so she would get on with things and do things. I don’t know how I would get on with someone who was like a brand-new apprentice’. Laura, Katie and Jayne also spoke about TAs use of initiative. They perhaps recognised this as a trait they had demonstrated as TAs themselves. Use of initiative could be seen to be engagement in joint enterprise and show understanding of the shared repertoire within the school, as well as mutual engagement in relationships and community maintenance (Wenger, 1998). So, while the umbrella term ‘initiative’ is something my participants saw as a TA trait, I argue that participation in tasks such as picking up marking that needed doing also illustrates participation within a CoP.

To summarise, as TAs, my participants understood that lesson planning and assessment were key aspects of being a teacher and recognised the importance of these reified concepts. Being a TA within a CoP had not necessarily taught them how to plan or assess but did expose them to the shared repertoire of teachers and their understanding of rehearsed

concepts and actions (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). That they had not had much opportunity to engage with these themselves shows diversity within the community, or social complexity (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). Alternatively, their engagement in behaviour management as part of the joint enterprise of the community demonstrated that as TAs, my participants all made use of and contributed to reified aspects of accountability (Wenger, 1998, p. 81). Less tangible aspects discussed above; responsibility (Wilson and Bedford, 2008), relationships with children (Lehane, 2016), resilience (Day and Kington, 2008) and use of initiative (Butt and Lowe, 2012) were also seen to be aspects of TA work that my participants developed as TAs within a CoP perhaps supporting their transition to teaching.

4.2.4 'Role Creep'

Who we are lies not just in the way we live or the way we think about ourselves, but also consists of what others think about us – it is socially defined (Wenger, 1998). As such, I was interested to consider how my participants felt others in the community saw TAs. This highlighted issues that relate to what Blatchford et al. (2009a) described as 'role creep' between the TA and teacher role and also reflects the view that TAs exist in a liminal space (Mansaray, 2006).

Children's and parents' views of TAs

In her school Laura felt that while the children understood who was a TA, and who was a teacher; she did not feel she was treated any differently to teachers as a TA, and noted that this was about the fact that all of the children respected everyone 'equally, everywhere in the school', supporting Eyre's et al.'s findings that showed that distinction between teachers and TAs 'did not appear important to the children' (2014, p. 153). Laura saw this as a positive, as did Jake, but Jake was concerned that this ambiguity would result in challenges as he became a teacher; he strongly requested that he did not undertake any of his assessed teaching placements in his home school because he felt that the children did see him as something other than a teacher. He had very positive relationships with the children but gave the impression that because of before and after school club time interactions in the private school in which he worked, he was perhaps seen by them as insurmountably 'not a teacher', and this would put him at a disadvantage in assessed placements.

Katie's school had always identified both teacher and TAs as 'the teaching team' on badges for example. When asked whether she felt she had always been perceived as different to teachers she said:

> 'I am certain they don't. Don't get me wrong, there are a number of occasions, I was always the one to take the register, again my teacher knew that if she turned her back, I would take over… But they just still knew that Miss W was the teacher…. but they also thought I was a teacher, and they would come up and show me stuff, they would do as I asked, I didn't have to say, 'Miss W, will you tell them...?' So, I'm sure they knew. They know I am not, I was not the teacher, even though I teach… they knew I was not the teacher. Having said that some parents, said, they thought I was

> a teacher. Just another teacher in the year group, which was quite nice…. Will the parents ever realise, 'well she's not a teacher, she's a TA!?'

She had no concerns in terms of making the transition to teaching – perhaps because she knew that when she became a teacher, she would still be seen as a member of 'the teaching team' unlike Jake who would be moving from being 'TA' to 'teacher'.

The historical view that TAs had a lower status in the school (Kerry, 2008) was not something my participants alluded to. To consider how TAs felt others in the school viewed them, I used a piece of documentary evidence to collect TA's views on how well supported and how valued they felt as TAs following Blatchford et al.'s (2009a) findings that TAs felt undervalued because their role was misunderstood. The data itself was limited (all placed a marker on the middle to upper end of a scale from not supported/not valued to very well supported/very well valued) and failed to provide a distinction between feeling valued and feeling supported, but the comments that my participants made whilst completing this task were valuable. Although Jayne was a volunteer, she spoke throughout the training as feeling very supported in her role as TA at her home school. Similarly, Nicole, Laura, Katie and Jake all also spoke positively about the support they received as TAs. All said in their current schools that they felt valued reflecting Johnson's (2018) view that the most 'integrated' TAs felt valued and respected. Katie also spoke about her previous (secondary) school employment where she felt she received 'no support from management'; this was clearly something she expected in the role of TA, and that she and many of the TAs at this school felt 'underwhelmed and undervalued'. Given that all at times expressed feeling happy in their schools, it was perhaps unsurprising that they had favourable views about the support they felt they received and whether they felt valued. Wenger (1998) would argue that relationships are an important part of mutuality of engagement as is being able to give and receive help, so for my participants, feeling supported and valued could be seen to be interlinked with their membership of their school communities.

'Overstepping the mark'

The approach in Katie's school of a 'teaching team' could perhaps be seen to contribute to people within the school not seeing TAs as a separate and perhaps more peripheral participant within the community. This was an idea that was of interest to me considering

research about 'role creep' (Blatchford et al., 2009a). In the first set of interviews, one participant had talked about having seen TAs in the past 'overstepping the mark' – arguably easily done when working in Mansaray's (2006) 'liminal space' and presented this negatively describing it as TAs taking on responsibilities or tasks that should have been carried out by the teacher. This interested me as it implied there was in existence a line between the two roles. In the next set of interviews, I then asked my other participants about this idea. Laura was confused, asking 'how could that be negative?' because she felt there really was not a boundary between the teacher and the TA. Katie's immediate response to my question about overstepping the mark was 'I have probably done it'. Following on from this, it was apparent that she did feel that others may have seen her as being a TA who took on the role of the teacher, but also again questioned why this may be perceived to be a bad thing. She reflected that some TAs perhaps could be seen to undermine teachers if contradicting behaviour management approaches for example and then returned to the idea that she 'might be that TA [that oversteps the line]'. Jayne was less surprised by the negative connotations attached to the idea of 'overstepping the mark', but diplomatically framed this as TAs having different 'ways of doing things'. One TA that she had recently worked with had abided very much to her contracted hours and was 'out of the door' as soon as each session had ended, but Jayne saw this as unhelpful - she felt the conversations between the teacher and TA that took place outside lessons were valuable for developing positive working relationships recognising the need for communication and TA voice in the TA-teacher relationship (Johnson, 2018).

What do participants not associate with the role of the TA?

Perhaps surprisingly given the abundance of research focussed on the impact (or not) that TAs have on pupil progress data (Blatchford et al. 2009a) and my participants' goal to qualify to teach, there was a significant omission in my data surrounding their understanding of the link between teaching and pupil progress; pupil progress and the TA's part in that was not explicitly mentioned as a TA responsibility at all by my participants and only implicitly in literature that referred to teacher responsibility for pupils (Wilson and Bedford, 2008). In over 30 hours of interviews, the only mentions of 'pupil progress' or '[pupil] outcomes' were when Laura once talked about disliking pupil progress meetings which she felt were flawed in that some pupils were 'written off' as not being able to meet expected progress, and

when Jayne mentioning in passing that she was given a target relating to understanding pupil progress following her two-week introductory placement. Although not specifically mentioning pupil progress, when asked to specifically note what being a TA had given them as they prepared to become teachers, Laura said that others perceived her to have a good understanding of working with children with SEN from her experience as a TA, and Jayne said being a TA helped her gain 'an understanding of child development and how best to help children socially, emotionally and academically.

The TA role within a CoP

What the TAs in my study spoke about in terms of being part of the school community, and what I argue is what helps prepare them to be teachers, is their participation in a school's CoP. As in figure 4 TAs engage in the mutual engagement, shared repertoire and joint enterprise of the school CoP. My participants viewed themselves to be a part of the school community in their TA role, but do not position themselves as centrally as teachers; all but one felt they moved to a more central role in their home school community between the first interview (when they were generally TAs) and 12 months later (when nearing completion of teacher training). The vignette (as in Wenger, 1998) shown in Appendix 10 illustrates an example of how teachers are in a more central position to TAs in a school CoP.

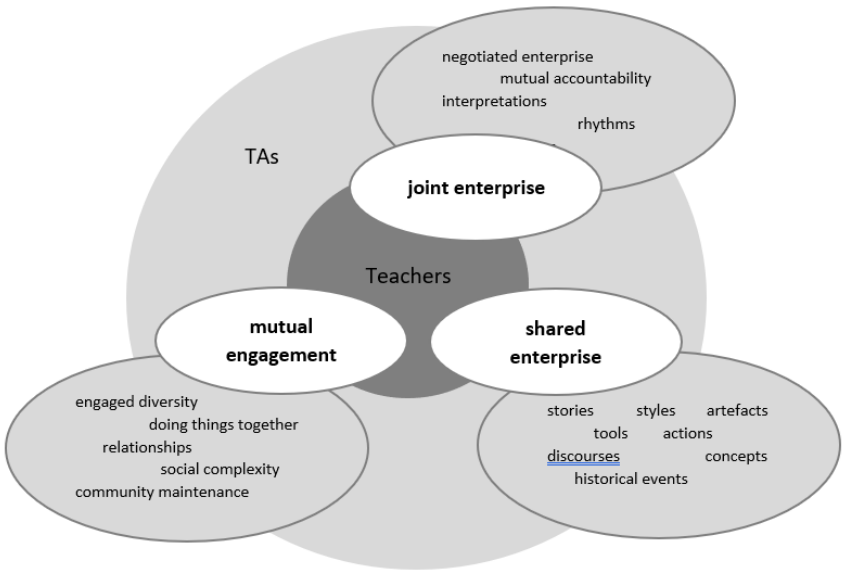

Figure 4 - TAs in a school CoP

4.2.5 Summary

At the outset of my study, I wanted to find out what TAs understood their role to be, how they saw themselves as TAs within a school CoP and whether what they had learnt (or not) from being a TA to support them as they became teachers. At the end of the study, my participants reflected on what they felt they had learnt as TAs to support their transition to teaching. There was a general feeling that as former TAs, there was much that my participants felt they had learnt, or found they knew from experience which could be seen as tacit learning from more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1987). All referred in different ways to learning from other more experienced teachers (Bolton, 2015; Flores and Day, 2006). Jayne said:

> 'teaching is what I want to do, and the experience I have gained has made me who I am today'. Being a TA, 'Gave [her] an understanding of what would be involved and expectations of the [teacher] role. Working with different people enabled [her] to observe and learn new or different techniques that did and didn't work.'.

Jake also summarised specific things that he had learnt from mentors in each school placement. For Nicole, who remained at the same school in which she had been a TA once she qualified, she felt 'massively' prepared because there were things she 'just knew' from being a TA such as school expectations about open evenings, assessments, parents' evenings and SEN. Jake considered this beyond the specific share repertoire of a single school community; 'being a TA has allowed me to experience so much on a day to day basis that now as a teacher, there is not much that shocks me or that I haven't dealt with before.' Jake created an interesting metaphor; he described a 'toolbox' which held 'all [his] knowledge of being a TA'; things like how to build up relationships, how to do displays and how to deal with children on a one-to-one basis. He said: 'It is all there, and I can bring it out as and when needed!'. I argue that creation of a toolkit of TA knowledge, full of varied and diverse skills relevant to teaching, comes through participation in a CoP.

4.3 Training to teach: How does the experience of being part of a school community impact on TAs who are becoming teachers?

Here I have considered my findings about CoP within Wenger's (1998) three dimensions of CoPs; mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. My data collection highlighted events or experiences which can be seen to be aspects of mutual engagement and joint enterprise more so than shared repertoire, but this was to be anticipated; 'the elements of the [shared] repertoire can be very heterogeneous. They gain their coherence not…as specific activities, symbols or artifacts, but from the fact that they belong to the practice of a community pursuing and enterprise' (Wenger, 1998, p. 82).

4.3.1 CoPs

What 'community' meant to my participants

Before considering my data within Wenger's three dimensions, I present what community means to my participants. After the end of their training, the plan had been to meet up with participants for a final review or reflection on my research. However, due to the unforeseen Covid-19 lockdown, face to face interviews were not possible; an email 'interview' seemed the least intrusive and time-consuming approach to enable me to conclude my data collection. I asked participants to explain what 'community' meant to them. In the context of experiencing a global critical event that arguably 'brought people together', their views on what it meant to be part of a community are interesting but influenced by a highly atypical unifying experience.

Three participants alluded to the lockdown and coping as part of a community:

> Nicole wrote: 'Over the last few weeks how everyone has come together and <u>supported</u> one another has shown a real community in my school. We have a work WhatsApp chat and that has really <u>brought everyone together</u> as we've all been <u>talking on a daily basis</u>. Being close friends with other teachers and TAs. <u>Supportive</u> headteacher and SLT, who I know I can turn to for <u>advice</u>. I'm confident in <u>seeking out help</u> if I'm unsure on anything and there is <u>always someone in the school I can talk to'</u>.
>
> Katie wrote, 'My school is a huge part of the community. We have a community Hub as part of the school that offers <u>support</u> to families on the estate. This is in the form

of money advice, benefits advice, food parcels, job searches. The parents of our children access these services, and we can signpost them. We work together on important celebration dates throughout the year. These include fireworks night on the school field, chocolate raffles and fetes.'

Laura said wrote the best for the children. From that we sort of just build a mutual respect and we are all equals, there is a hierarchy within school but when we are discussing the next steps or ideas, we are all welcome to share our opinions and thoughts which makes you automatically feel like part of the team. Also, being there for each other and supporting one another through a crisis like this virus, there is no going back! You are bonded for life!'

Two participants wrote more generally about what community meant to them:

Jayne said, 'Communication, working together as a team, feeling that you can approach people, positive feedback from colleagues, reactions and comments from the children and parents.'

Jake said, 'This was perhaps the most difficult setting to adjust too in my experience essentially since it wasn't a school, I particularly wanted to work in. I have adjusted to this community/setting now and that is mainly due to the teaching staff trying to include me and make me feel part of the team. This has been particularly important as I do not have a class.'

Pride in their schools' response to the pandemic is evident here, particularly surprisingly in Laura's response; she was not happy in her first months in her current school and in pre-lockdown interviews spoke at length about not feeling part of the school community. Jake's unhappiness with his new QTS but non-class-based role which he started after qualifying is apparent in his answer to this question, however, overall, key ideas that can also be seen in Wenger's (1998) work are apparent (underlined above) and considered in more depth in the following sections.

4.3.2 Mutual Engagement

The theme of support seems to have been central to my participants' journey from TA to teacher. In using the term 'support', I encompass Wenger's ideas about knowing how to give and receive help, understanding what is known and not known, and recognising that members have different levels of competence within the community (1998, p 73-76).

Support

Wenger wrote that 'peace, happiness, and harmony are … not necessary properties of a CoP' (1998, p. 77), however, my data showed that there was alignment between schools in which my participants' felt happiest and considered themselves to be part of the CoP, and where they also spoke about feeling supported. The mentoring role is seen in literature to be a significant factor impacting on teacher identity development (Hobson et al., 2008; Rodriques and Mogarro; 2019) and one that has a lasting impact on positive feelings about teaching (Flores and Day, 2006). Jake's mentoring support was something he spoke positively about in three out of four settings; he felt he had been well supported by his home school, his developing school and his extending placement mentors and learnt a lot from them. LE's home school appeared to be very supportive in their approach based on her comments during interviews throughout my study, with her noting that support from the school had boosted her confidence. However, Jayne felt that at her developing placement school, her mentor was less supportive. She found she needed to adopt quite an independent approach to get through the placement; she went in each day and 'just kind of got on', doing what she knew she needed to do. Laura's mentoring support appeared to be something that made the difference between her enjoying what she was doing and how she dealt with 'meltdowns'. In her home school, which she considered to be a family, she felt there was always support available, however, in her final placement school in which she had also been offered a job, she felt unsupported and unhappy.

By the end of the course, both Nicole and Katie were teaching as UQTs in their 'home' schools and expressed feeling very central to the community as TAs and during their training. However, mentoring support during their final placement was a disappointment to them and this resulted in both considering their future at their schools. Both had been allocated a deputy head as their mentor, and both suggested that their respective deputy

heads did not have time to effectively carry out the mentoring role despite it being recognised that 'proto-professionals' should have access to effective mentoring (Clarke, 2016). Nicole felt she rarely received support, to the extent that the HT stepped in to keep an eye on the situation: 'I think going from the training placement, having loads of support, it was literally bang, Year 6, anyone going to tell me what to do?'. She had expected that for example, someone would check her planning, and this had not happened. She felt that having no TA allocated to her also meant she had 'no help, zero support'. Katie explained that in her view a mentor should be aware of the requirements of the placement, be objective, ensure the mentee knows what they are doing and above all should have the time to support the mentee, aligning with Lehane' s (2016) view that effective collaboration and communication depend on positive mentor-mentee relationships. She had experienced what she felt was good mentoring support during placements elsewhere, but in her home school, felt 'I missed out on having a proper mentor'.

Relationships and 'family'

The 'social complexity' (Wenger, 1998, p. 73) of school communities is sometimes described by members as a family. Laura particularly, but also Jake, Nicole and Jayne talk about the feeling of 'family' in settings where they had positive experiences and clearly felt part of the school CoP. Katie did not talk about the school as a family but did display what could be described as loyalty to the school during her training – she chose to stay despite receiving two unsolicited job offers elsewhere. Although definitions of 'family' are ubiquitous and much debated, themes given as part of participants' answers above (4.3.1) such as 'working together', 'being part of a team' and 'being there for each other' might be found in definitions of family, with relationships being core to the concept of family. Relationships are seen as a notable dimension of mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998, p.73). Unsurprisingly, all participants spoke about relationships both explicitly and implicitly in every interview.

Covering two floors with EYFS and KS1 downstairs, and KS2 upstairs, the geography of Nicole's school building seemed to contribute to a clear split between groups of staff within the school; staff also tended to have closer relationships with the TAs and teachers working in the same year groups – year group classrooms were next to each other along the

corridor. Alternatively, Jake talked about having a lot of 'dealings' with everyone in his home school. He felt that perhaps because of the small size and the fact that it was a private school, everyone 'does get on together… and there are no set groups'. Returning to the idea of mentoring, or the giving and receiving of advice, Jake spoke throughout his training about his mentor at his home school. He clearly respected her and had built up a positive relationship with her and could always go to her and others in the school for advice; 'I would trust everything that she says. And if I didn't understand something or I didn't know what that was, I would be quite comfortable going to any teacher in the school and asking what on earth she was going on about and how I could do that or learn to improve'. He explained that he would continue to seek her support even after leaving the school.

Wenger identified the cliques, disagreements and tensions as well as peaceful co-existence in CoPs (Wenger, 1998, p. 77) which can also be seen in families; he wrote that 'conflict and misery can even constitute the core characteristic of a shared practice, as they do in some dysfunctional families' (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). As such, whether relationships that my participants formed was seen by them to be positive or negative is not relevant when considering their part in the community. However, as TAs, community relationships already existed before they embarked on teacher training, implying an understanding of this aspect of mutual engagement within a school community.

Peer support

As noted by Jake above, a less formal mentoring, or peer support role arose which overlapped the themes of 'support' and 'relationships and 'family'. Laura also spoke about the support that she had received from her 'family' in her home school as a new teacher in another school, even when experiencing challenges during placements elsewhere. The head teacher (who was head at both Laura's home school and the school where she was later employed as a UQT) appeared to initially be someone to whom Laura felt she could go to for support and advice, but once in a teacher role, she felt 'criticised' by him. Within the school at which she was employed as a teacher in the final months of the course, she felt very unsupported by colleagues who did not even say good morning to her and seemed very unhappy in the school. This perhaps implies that more informal peer support was more

important to Laura than structured advice from more senior teachers – although this still caused her upset when negative.

Nicole was one of the few participants who identified an additional 'community' on her communities sheet; that of her friends who were currently training to teach, or who had recently completed training. Wenger (1998) may have categorised this is more of a constellation of practice rather than a true community, however, the fact that she identified this group was telling; she said this group was helpful to her as she did not 'feel stupid asking questions'. At this point in her training, she was new to the school and perhaps did not feel sufficiently mutually engaged within the community to seek advice from others within the school implying that it takes time to become a member of a CoP, as well as participating in the joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire of the community.

Staff room

Wenger placed much emphasis on the concept of reification, and I argue that the 'the staff room' is an example of an experience congealed into 'thingness' (Wenger, 1998, p. 58) in the primary school community. In itself, the staff room is simply a room, but within a CoP, it can be seen as a nexus which connects many aspects of school life. It is a place, perhaps more than any other in the school where people meet, engage in community maintenance, negotiate local responses to situations, share stories and build relationships. It is arguably also a space which belongs to everyone, rather than 'my' classroom or office which 'belongs' to an individual, enabling at times some balancing out of the hierarchical power relationships within a school. This concept deserves much greater consideration than is possible in the limitations of this thesis, but briefly touched on here are my participants' views about what the staff room meant to them.

Forming relationships was part of 'the staff room' as a reified nexus of the community. Jake spoke about being able to go back to his home school after his final placement, sit down with the staff, make himself a cup of tea and relax in a familiar environment. In a school community which Laura saw to be less than ideal, she talked about people not acknowledging each other in the mornings around the photocopier. Early on and bearing in

mind Nicole had only recently started at the school at this point, she initially said 'here, I feel like we sit in the staff room and it is very quiet'. However, by the end of the course in the same school, she talked about sitting in the staff room regularly before school and at lunch times and by the end of the course, it was clear she was a 'staffroom regular' at breaktimes and lunchtimes whereas she noted others who she saw as less central members of the community did not join in. This could be seen to align with her movement from a more peripheral to a more central place in the CoP. Jayne, as a new volunteer TA at her home school initially felt nervousness about joining in with conversations in the staff room at lunch time. She said she did 'feel like…the outsider'; she worried about whether she came across as 'intellectual' enough expressing her view that she was 'not very confident in social situations…a bit of a worrier'. However, she understood that overcoming her nervousness was an important part of her building relationships. She felt that people in her developing placement school (where she did not feel part of the CoP) kept themselves to themselves and did not really acknowledge each other in the staff room.

Communication

Not explicitly noted in Wenger (1998) but perhaps encompassed in his suggestion that 'whatever it takes to make mutual engagement possible is an essential component of any practice' (Wenger, 1998, p. 74), communication could be seen to lie at the heart of a school community. Communication is frequently referred to in literature as crucial to relationships (Lehane, 2016), a characteristic of good teachers (Malderez et al., 2007) and TAs (Wilson and Bedford, 2008) and as a feature of TA integration (Johnson, 2018). However, when communication was referred to during interviews, this was always mentioned as a deficit, and as something that had links to other aspects of mutual engagement. For example, Jayne and Nicole both talked about communication being poor in schools where they felt they were outside a CoP. For Nicole this was her home school at the beginning of the degree (when she had just started at the school) and for Jayne this was her developing placement school which was successful in terms of her placement outcomes, but she 'hated it' because people did not communicate well. Katie also mentioned concerns with communication within her home school; for example, explaining that how classes were being split, or which classes TAs would be working was not something the SLT shared with teachers until what felt like the last minute. This appears to be part of a bigger 'problem' within the dimension

of mutual engagement and joint enterprise; where communication was seen to be unsatisfactory, this also contributed to staff feeling they were not involved in responding to dilemmas, or involved with negotiated enterprise (Wenger, 1998, p. 73-75). For Jayne and Nicole, lack of communication was damaging the relationships they were trying to form as part of the school community – they felt they were unable to exchange information.

4.3.3 Joint Enterprise

Joint enterprise within the theory of CoPs encompasses negotiated enterprise, mutual accountability, interpretations, local response to influences beyond members' control and the use of and contribution to reified aspects of accountability (Wenger, 1998, p. 73-81). Themes that arose during interviews which could be seen to be part of joint enterprise were time management and workload, and TA deployment.

Local responses to time management and workload

Once qualified, Nicole found the workload to have increased even from training, and perhaps her experience as a TA had not prepared her for this: 'I think everybody tells you how much workload there is, but you don't actually realise. You don't realise.' She also spoke about this in terms of time, finding that in the teacher role, particularly once she took on a UQT role, she felt she had no time: 'But it is just time. It is time. There's no time!'. As she took on the role of UQT, Nicole reflected that: 'you go home and you can't switch off. There is this to do, and I could be doing this, I could be doing that. It is a never-ending list of jobs.' She also made comparisons to what she perceived was happening in other schools, finding that they were surprised at how early she was feeling she needed to get to school (7:15am). She had set herself boundaries such as ensuring she left by 5pm, even if there were still jobs to do, but still appeared to be struggling under the pressure of increased workload and a reduction in time in which to carry out tasks. Jayne also implied that the workload for planning had been significantly higher than she had imagined, and at the end of the training did say she had had a 'meltdown' worrying about the responsibility of doing 'everything' once the class teacher who she would be taking over from had left.

The issue of workload is an ongoing challenge in teacher, identified in the DfES's 2003 workforce agreement and still a current issue seen to cause stress for trainee teachers (Glazzard, 2016). Malderez et al., (2007) argued that mentors should provide support for managing workload, but neither Jayne nor Nicole had fully anticipated the increase in workload that they would encounter as teachers. However, others did appear to have realised workload would increase once they qualified; Jake only mentioned workload twice during interviews, and on both occasions talked about this in terms of being pleased he was on top of things. 'Throughout my training, I have had no illusions as to how much work a

teacher must do and how tiring the job is and I found myself saying I know what I'm getting into. Although, I still think this is true, having started working as a teacher it has come as a realisation of just how tiring the job is!'. Katie only mentioned workload briefly during the interviews. She referred to her initially discussing the manageability of the workload of being a part time UQT as well as completing the training course, and later once she was a full time UQT, she talked about the SLT apparently adding to the existing workload which they were 'supposed to be lightening'. She did talk about working at home, but not in a particularly negative sense, just that she was lucky that her own children were old enough to let her get on with work. However, Katie did use working 'too long hours' as a rationale for not attending a particular Saturday event that some children and some other members of staff were attending. Laura had touched on workload in interviews, specifically noting that the teacher workload was greater than that of a TA. During the course, she said that stressful points would not particularly be improved by the removal of some of the workload, but that being given more time in which to carry out work would have helped. Arguably workload, and specifically being able to manage workload relates to issues around personal survival; stage 2 of Maynard and Furlong's (1995) five stages within the process of becoming a teacher and should be something facilitated by mentors (Malderez et al., 2007).

TA deployment

I argue that teachers' deployment of TA is inherently a negotiated enterprise (Wenger, 1998) in that each TA-teacher relationship and the tasks which each (or both) fulfil require negotiation. This particularly interested me when considering TAs who train to teach – had their own previous experience as TAs impacted on their approach to deploying TAs? My data showed that my participants voiced reluctance when it came to asking TAs to carry out tasks, but interesting contradictions arose. Jayne spoke about there being some TA tasks she would like to keep when she qualified as a teacher, but she also said that she would not 'expect the TA to be doing those boring little jobs, you know I am more than happy to do that [laminating]'. Laura expressed that she would not feel comfortable asking someone to do something that was unpleasant, specifically mentioning a reading task with children. She argued that:

> ‘I don’t think because [TAs] are any less than you [teachers, or] that they should be treated any less than you. They have still worked hard to get where they are, and they are there to do exactly the same job as [teachers] with less responsibility.’

Both Jayne and Laura had mentioned menial tasks as if they were something disagreeable, and that they would not necessarily want to delegate these to TAs. This suggests that they were unprepared to deploy TAs supporting literature which has long suggested this is an issue (Calder and Grieve, 2004; Barkham, 2008; Blatchford et al., 2009a). However, there was evidence that some participants understood that teachers do need be able delegate some tasks to TAs. Katie, in her new unqualified teacher role reflected that the deployment of TAs was a skill she needed to develop. She said to a fellow TA, ‘I have been a TA and I need to learn how to direct a TA’. She implied that she knew what she (Katie) had been willing to do as a TA, but she recognised that other TAs would perhaps not be willing to undertake the tasks that she did or respond to situations in the classroom using the same approaches as her. However, she also was aware that the pressures of managing her time might be relieved by delegation. It was apparent though that Katie found this concept challenging – when talking about putting up a display and asking TAs to complete tasks –

> ‘I should have been on NQT time going to observe somebody, but I did the display because it needed doing. As teacher, I shouldn’t probably have done that…when I say ‘shouldn’t have’, it is because there is something else that I should have been doing. I am going to have to ‘man up’ [learn to tell TAs to do things]! As long as I say it nicely.’

Katie began to make links between the workload of teachers and the deployment of TAs. She suggested that ‘teachers don’t have time’ to do the tasks that TAs might be asked to do, suggesting that part of the TA role is to support teachers in managing to complete what needs to be done in a limited time. She said that ‘I also understand that working as a teacher…there are not enough hours in the day’ implying that she knew there was a need for teachers to relinquish tasks to TAs to ensure other tasks could be prioritised; ‘I mean, ‘clear away’ that is going to have to be the TA because I have not got time’. Jayne also reflected;

> ‘And that is one of the things I have been thinking about. As a teacher, what would I expect from my TA? Because part of me does think the TA is there to support the

> children, and then the other stuff could be done on the side, but then I understand that the 'stuff' takes time as well…'.

Initially, Jake identified that he would 'find it hard to let go of some of the [TA] responsibilities', because doing everything for other people was what he was used to. By the end of his training however, Jake had found planning to deploy TAs very straightforward in a class that had a high proportion of children with SEND. He returned to the idea that deployment of TAs was in part dependent on the different TAs involved; he noted (with amusement) that this would have been different had he been in his home school where it would depend on which TA he was asking to do things;

> 'One of them, I would tell her to do something and she would probably take over anyway, one would do it no questions asked and one wouldn't do it at all because she doesn't do anything, so it really would depend on the person'.

Others noted what being a TA had taught them about how to work with TAs themselves in the future. Nicole said:

> 'I can empathise with my TA and others. Especially when they are given jobs to do by others who don't fully appreciate the time it takes to do things. Sometimes teachers can have high expectations and just assume that the TA knows how to complete the task that has been given.

Laura said:

> 'I think the way I use and work with my TA is built on this, I have complete faith in my TA and know regardless she will get the job done. I think I responded really well to the teacher I was working with because we were equal hierarchy within the classroom, we are both their teachers. I think spending a lot of time with SEN children as a TA has helped me; I know how hard it is for a TA to work with the same children 24/7 so I try and work with my SEN children 70% of the time and ask my TA to complete tasks with them catered to their targets the other 30%.

Here, Nicole and Laura seemed to show that they would empathise with TAs as teachers, but it could be seen that being a TA had taught them how to treat TAs, rather than the more general skill of effective TA deployment. Arguably, teachers with whom they worked during

their time as TAs may also have provided examples of how not to deploy TAs - for example with both TAs and teachers doing the same jobs, perpetuating what could be seen to be poor practice relating to the lack of teachers' training in the deployment of TAs (Calder and Grieve, 2004; Barkham 2008; Blatchford et al., 2009a).

Training for deploying TAs

Given that my participants displayed lack of confidence in understanding their responsibility for TA deployment once they had qualified, I asked them about the training for teachers in deploying TAs; Nicole summarised a key point 'I don't actually know what you would teach someone on how to deploy a TA', perhaps identifying the root of the challenge in training teachers to effectively deploy TAs. Nicole raised contradictory points; at the point that Nicole started to think about herself deploying TAs as a teacher, she questioned who needed the training – the teacher, or the TA. Her view was 'it is probably the TA [needing] the training rather than the teacher, I don't know', but it was evident that she didn't think she as the teacher was responsible for that training. She said when talking about having an apprentice TA that, 'I wouldn't say it was my job to tell her; that is her training. That is something she needs to do at college or whatever'. This challenged Nicole's earlier reminiscences of her own time at college during her own apprenticeship – she found the college-based sessions to be too basic and felt she learnt more doing the job in schools. However, later in her training, Nicole voiced the idea that as a teacher she was going to be really conscious that she did not have a 'TA siting in the classroom not really doing much…not just sat watching me do my input' as she knew that as a TA she had felt that she sometimes had experienced this; 'it can be a good half an hour that I am sat watching'. She said that when being observed,

> 'it is really bad but…you always feel that you have to look busy, and actually you might not be doing anything…I usually get a clipboard and write notes on it, but the notes are irrelevant'.

Mid way through training, Nicole seemed to be seeing things from both the TA and the teacher perspectives, but she seemed to lack clarity; as a TA she could see that it was the teacher's responsibility to deploy the TA effectively, but as a teacher she felt the responsibility lay with the TA learning how to do things at college, and to use their initiative.

4.3.4 Shared Repertoire

The 'dynamic and interactive' (Wenger, 1998, p. 84) nature of shared repertoire means it is hard to identify in specific examples. However, my participants all shared experiences that showed their understanding of the ways of doing things within their home school community, for example Nicole explained the different published schemes that her school used and how these may differ from those used by other schools in the academy chain and shared stories from their schools. As a voluntary TA early on in the course, Jayne actively sought opportunities to 'see what it's like' in other year groups in the school, and Katie spoke at length about a particular project and the way it had been implemented in her school. Jake's consideration of his home school was a useful case study in understanding shared repertoire. Jake was alone in his determination to find an NQT (to be known as early career teacher ECT from Sept 2021 (DfE, 2021c)) role in a school other than his home school. However, this was not rooted in a desire to move away from a CoP in which he did not feel happy; he was a central member of the community and expressed great regret when it came time to finally hand in his resignation. In his first interview, he noted how well he knew his home school and how this route into teaching had 'made sense' to him and always been part of his career plan;

> 'you get to know people a lot more, you get to know the teachers, you get to know the other support staff and how the school runs and how I can help with that and I think that has teamed up quite nicely'.

The shared repertoire of the school was something that Jake felt fully engaged with – for example the relationship the school staff had with parents. He also understood that the discourse (Wenger, 1998) around the financial situation of parents his home school which he described as a bubble in which parents were able to afford everything, but also that it was felt that parental pressure at the school was much greater than it perhaps would be in a state school. However, he was able to use this understanding as point of comparison with other schools which helped him develop his understanding of himself as a teacher. After his introductory placement he discussed at length how different the school was to his home school. He framed this as 'interesting differences' rather than attaching a strongly positive or negative slant to this, although did say that on reflection he felt that the strict religious ethos that he saw at the placement school helped him see that it probably was not the sort of school he would feel happy in long term. He had also felt that here he had been seen

‘very much’, ‘you are the student, you are on your own’ and ‘we are our own school. We are a teacher community’. It was quite separate. I didn’t feel engaged in the teacher community there.’ As such, his existing understanding about a range of schools enhanced his learning within different schools, arguably providing him with a broader understanding of teaching, schools and himself as a teacher.

4.3.5 CoPs in 'other' schools

Although not every placement was enjoyable for my participants, none reported that they had not made progress in their own learning and professional development when in other schools. This was a positive finding that challenged anecdotal assumptions about this training route over recent years; it was presumed that PTS students found it hard to become part of other school communities as they were so embedded within the shared repertoire of their home school. However, following his developing placement in another school, Jake was sad to be leaving the school in which he had a shared history with others in this community; he told me about the progress of a certain child in his developing placement class, and was keen to know how well he had done in the SATs. Six months later as he neared the end of the training, he happily reported how well the child had done having been in touch with the school to find out, and as such become part of the school's history. He also reported being made temporary IT co-ordinator in the school for the duration of the placement; he was mutually engaged in the community through giving and receiving help and built long lasting relationships.

4.3.6 Summary

As I embarked on this study, I wanted to find out how trainee teachers who had been TAs became teachers in CoPs and whether their TA experience had an impact on their learning within a CoP. As above, it can be seen that my participants' place within CoPs supported their learning during teacher training, however, my participants were both unprepared and unclear about how to take responsibility for the deployment of TAs, even though had experienced 'both sides'. This did not surprise me given that the range of tasks that TAs are expected to perform is so diverse, the expectations of TAs are ill-defined, and that the prior experience, skills and knowledge of each TA is so varied. As such, I argue that training for trainees and teachers on how to manage and deploy a theoretical TA is virtually impossible; training instead seems to involve understanding the TA as an individual before a 'right' way of deploying them can be defined. This prior experience might provide TAs training to teach with their biggest challenge in the transition between TA and teacher. Their TA role was ill-defined when they were working as a TA and so as teachers, they find TA deployment more complex than trainee teachers who have no first-hand experience of the TA role. However, considering this through the lens of CoPs, this ambiguity can be seen to provide TAs training to teach with a heightened understand of the importance of mutual engagement in joint enterprise within a school community, thereby aiding their transition. Through mutual negotiation of local responses to situations, this group of trainees have engaged with a community and therefore have greater (if not complete) understanding of the rhythms, local responses to situations and mutual accountability in a CoP (Wenger, 1998).

The requirement to engage in placements in other schools during their training was of interest to me as I had believed that because PTS students appeared to be embedded within one specific ('home') school CoP, they would find it challenging to make a place for themselves in other schools' CoPs. However, my findings instead implied that participants used their experience of community membership in one school, and as part of their wider understanding of the practice of TAs, and of trainee teachers, and of teachers to inform their understanding of other schools' CoPs. This aligned with Wenger's (1998) view that 'constellations of practice' differ from 'CoPs'. TAs, trainee teachers and teachers in school CoPs form a constellation of practice through their 'shared historical routes, related enterprises, shared artifacts and overlapping discourses' (Wenger, 1998, p. 127).

4.4 Reflecting on a change in professional identity: How and when is the teacher identity of the TA training to teach formed?

In this section, I 'burrow' into each participants' changing professional identity. Their 'stories' (example in Appendix 3) are analysed here. Alongside these, I have considered my participants' responses to the communities sheet (Appendix 5) that I asked them to complete twice during their training.

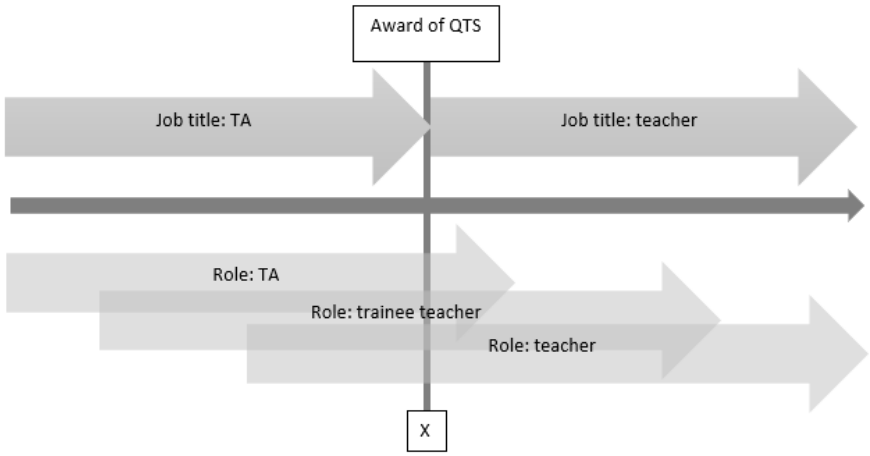

Figure 5 - TAs training to teach. A trajectory.

4.4.1 Jayne

Jayne decided she could not draw herself in either the TA community, or the teacher community at the start of the course. She was a relatively new volunteer TA to the school. 12 months later, she saw herself as being at the centre of both the TA and the teacher communities. This perhaps indicated that she had become more confident of her place within the school community as a TA, but also saw herself becoming a teacher.

In interviews, Jayne called herself a trainee or student teacher for most of the course. As in figure 5, I argue that there is a great deal of overlap between TA, trainee teacher and teacher, but for LE, this was perhaps more clear-cut because she was a volunteer at the school and had only started there just before her training commenced. Although these transitions refer to LE's role or place on a training course rather than qualifications as such, this loosely relates to Wenger's (1998) view that 'getting your level' was an important part of identity formation, and Danielewicz's (2001) recognition that external validation of performance helps establish identity.

I was aware that during the fourth interview Jayne had started to refer to the TAs as 'they' rather than 'we', implying she no longer saw herself as a TA. However, it was clear that Jayne was reluctant to call herself a teacher until she had been introduced as a teacher to parents by the head teacher; this was a critical event in her journey to become a teacher. Although by this point she had been offered the teaching post, taught the class that she would be taking over, and been involved closely with curriculum planning – all arguably demonstrating full membership of the school CoP and the wider constellation of practice of teachers, until this was voiced publicly, she did not feel that she was a teacher.

This need for external validation (Danielewicz (2001) and self-doubt or a lack of self-confidence seemed to be common themes with LE; Burn et al. (2015) argued that this was not helpful when training to teach, and the reason for this is perhaps illustrated by LE. She recounted a critical event towards the end of her training; she been observed by her UBM and SBM as part of her final placement and until the UBM began to speak, she had no idea whether it had been a successful lesson or not and appeared to be genuinely surprised at the effusive praise she received. This suggested that what others saw her as had a

significant impact on her identity, but also highlighted a potentially challenging lack of ability to reflect on her own strengths moving forward.

4.4.2 Nicole

Nicole's drawings were identically placed in both the TA and teacher communities at the start of the course and again 12 months later; she initially felt she was in the middle of the TA community, but also did so later on, drawing herself in the same place 12 months later. This perhaps implied that she was not prepared to relinquish the idea that she was a TA, but did see that she was becoming a teacher – Hogden and Askew (2007) argued that 'letting go' is part of identity change, but others recognised that identity can involve membership of multiple communicates (Wenger, 1998). Supporting this, data from interviews showed that she began to see herself as a teacher at times after she had been offered the UQT teaching post, but there was still some ambiguity during this time regarding whether she was no longer a TA. In discussion, she said that what she was depended on what she was doing; some days she was covering for other teachers, and so was a teacher, but on other days she was doing TA work.

Nicole (along with Laura) seemed one of the least prepared for the realities of the teaching role, particularly in terms of stresses relating to workload (Glazzard, 2016; Kington and Day, 2008). She had had a very successful developing placement and seemed to be able to respond easily to advice given. During training, she had come across as pragmatic and resilient when faced with challenges. She gave herself rules (such as 'leave work by 5pm') and said, 'it will get done!' rather than allowing herself to become stressed by, for example, assignment deadlines. However, when I visited her two months into her UQT role she recounted a number of critical events – most related to the unexpected workload she was experiencing. She said: 'I could cry, I literally could cry!' indicating an emotional response which was impacting on her identity development (Kington and Day, 2008) I was interested to consider why this had come as a surprise to her as she was teaching in the school in which she had also been a TA so arguably had a good knowledge of how things were done in the school. When reviewing experienced teachers that she worked with as a TA, she had worked with three different class teachers during the course; the school was part of a large academy chain that frequently and without teachers having a choice, moved staff between schools at a term's notice. She very quickly found herself to be the 'expert' in the class and year group, when staff changes occurred, despite having only been in the school for a few months before the course started. This demonstrated her understanding of mutual

engagement (Wenger, 1998) in the school community but arguably did not support her professional development given that she had limited access to a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1987) from whom to learn. She had mentioned during interviews that two of the teachers who moved on did so because they were unhappy working at the academy chain and left for alternative employment. Later on in the course, she felt her NQT/final placement mentor was also providing limited support. Considering how she had learnt about teaching from others, it could be that key aspects of the role of the teacher were not effectively modelled to her resulting in her not having a full understanding of what would be expected of her in this school, however much she felt like an expert in comparison to other novices.

Nicole found it hard to cope with decisions being made without her input as she became a teacher at the school – there appeared to be little joint enterprise in the form of mutual accountability or negotiated enterprise (Wenger ,1998); decisions such as whether a TA would be allocated to her class, or what year group she taught were taken with no collective negotiation, or even exchange of opinions. It appeared that while she felt a central member in the school CoP, the school was more of a constellation of practice rather than a true CoP. Referring to Wenger's classification of each, the school had limited opportunity for sustained relationships due to the rapid staff turnover, did not allow people to do things together, members had little understanding of who knew what and who did not and again because of staff changing and there was little scope to build local lore and shared stories (Wenger 1998, p 125 – 127). Tools, artifacts and ways of doing things also were diverse across the academy chain which meant that a teacher could be moved mid-year with a few weeks' notice and be expected to use a different phonics scheme for example.

An entirely unanticipated outcome in terms of my research occurred; Nicole had had very successful placements and was seen to be an 'outstanding' trainee by those assessing her, but she was already considering leaving the profession. I had always thought that TAs membership of CoPs contributed to their success in training to teach, however in Nicole's case, where the TA worked in a school without a true CoP, they were able to complete their training, but gained none of the benefits seen for other participants who learnt to teach within a CoP.

4.4.3 Katie

Katie was in a different position to my other participants; she had been offered a UQT role just before the course started and as such was arguably ahead of her peers in terms of 'becoming a teacher'. She had been surprised to be offered the role by her head teacher as she had not applied for a teaching post. She agreed to take on the role because despite her worries about workload, she felt reassured that the school would be flexible and supportive during her training, and because after weighing up the pros and cons, she couldn't 'give up this opportunity'.

As such, she placed herself outside the TA community both the first and later times she completed the communities sheet. However, when reflecting on her time as a TA, she saw herself as being only on the periphery of this group – because she always knew that she was working towards being a teacher; in figure z, she would have almost omitted the outer 'TA' circle. In terms of the teacher community, she saw herself as being just inside this at the start of the course, but very much in the centre of the teacher community 12 months later. This was supported by interview data which showed that she understandably saw herself as a teacher from early on in the course, as did others. However, this may have been the main contributory factor to her feeling unsupported at times; others perhaps believed her to be 'doing fine' and so felt she perhaps did not need the more intensive support other UQTs/NQTs might have required. However, Katie repeatedly voiced to me her desire to keep learning about teaching; she wanted to be observed and have feedback to enable her to keep improving her practice, suggesting positive learning from experience (see table 4 - Burn et al., 2015), and in terms of Furlong and Maynard's (1995) stages of learning, had reached stage 5 being responsive to learning from experience rather than feeling personally criticised when negative feedback was shared. However, it seemed that this was not forthcoming in her home school.

Similarly to Nicole, there were also a number of critical events which might be seen to contribute to Katie subconsciously feeling that she was not in the centre of the school's CoP. The SLTs in the schools in which Katie and Nicole were employed both seemed to adopt a hierarchical leadership model; decisions were presented *fait accompli* which perhaps resulted in general teaching staff feeling a lack of mutual engagement. Wenger pointed out

that ‘mutual engagement does not entail homogeneity, but it does create relationships among people’ (1998, p 76); this is not to suggest that they expected to be involved in every decision, but simply that effective relationships were fostered. However, Katie and Nicole both spoke about the SLT as a separate entity on many occasions – ‘they have told us to do this…’ or ‘they expect us to…’. Rarely did either suggest that they had been part of an exchange of opinions or ‘included in what matters’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 74). This could have been their perception, and of course they may have only been sharing with me the incidents that troubled them (Katie often spoke about our interviews being like ‘therapy’), but for both there was something going on that was leading to them considering a future elsewhere – Katie had been offered a job elsewhere which she was keen to take, and Nicole was talking about leaving teaching altogether.

4.4.4 Jake

Of all my participants, Jake appeared to have the clearest vision of his identity at different points throughout the course, although as in appendix 6, it can be seen that there was a period of uncertainty early on in his training. He said, 'I go purely by job title'. At the start of the course, Jake's TA contract at the school had ended to allow him chance to complete his teacher training; the school felt they could not pay him during the course which would involve placements elsewhere, but he and they agreed that he would remain at the school on a voluntary basis. However, during the course, Jake did end up being paid as a supply TA for at least 2 days a week at the school during non-placement times. He voiced a very clear view that what he was would change depending on where he was on the course. As the course started, he saw himself as a trainee teacher, not a TA and initially when looking forward, he felt that it would only be once he had started a qualified teaching job that he would see himself as a teacher. When positioning his stick figure drawings, he placed himself outside most communities in the first instance, only feeling willing to place himself within one community – that of trainee teachers. 12 months later he did place himself within the circles of four communities, but all were only just inside the circle, perhaps indicating a reluctance to see himself fulfilling more than one role at once contradicting Wenger's (1998) views about multi-membership of CoPs. Jake's need to focus on being just one thing was supported by his description of his successful interview for his first teaching post; he said the only question he found he could not answer was one in which he was asked about what he did outside school; he said he had been focussed solely on gaining his degree and QTS for the last few years. However, I argue that for most, 'becoming a teacher' is a transition that is not related to job title, and the overlapping of the roles of TA, trainee teacher and teacher (figure 10) is what means TAs are well prepared to become teachers. As such, on first glance, Jake's perspective may be seen to contradict my argument.

However, more than other participants, Jake also was able to explain what he had learnt from other more experienced teachers; those that he had worked with in his own school CoP, and in other placement schools. In my first interview with him, I had the impression that Jake would be a very independent learner; he had done an Open University (OU) foundation degree (FdA) before enrolling on the PTS course and he also spoke about just having a go (at planning) and then reflecting on whether it had worked rather than taking

advice from others before trying it. However, it was clear that he actually was very keen to learn from more experienced teachers (Vygotsky, 1987) and others in the community demonstrating mutual engagement in a CoP (Wenger, 1998). He discussed four teachers (one from each placement) whom he felt had had an impact on his professional development, and also shared his views on how to deploy TAs he had worked with all of whom had very different ways of working.

Jake was the only one of my participants to (on two occasions) write up additional notes for me following his own reflections on events as they occurred – I had not asked participants to do this. These were very interesting as they were perhaps the only time I had critical events (Webster and Mertova, 2007) consciously identified by a participant themselves. In his home school before his developing placement he identified events that directly related to professional identity formation;

- a science lesson in which he excitedly realised all the children were on task and he was teaching. He said 'this felt such a big step in my training – I felt like I was in control'. This aligns with Danielewicz's (2001) view that performing the role in a substantive manner contributes to teacher identity formation.
- a swap between teaching in Y6 and Y1. He had previously believed EYFS and KS1 to be the phases he would choose to teach in, but he enjoyed teaching the Y6 class more than the Y1 class, particularly the level of subject knowledge covered in upper KS2 and as such opted to train in the 7-11 age phase rather than 5-9 as originally planned. This was interesting in that it showed he was open to new ideas as the final stage of Furlong and Maynard's (1995) stages of progress in teacher development.
- Jake said an 'unexpected milestone' was the arrival of his teacher reference number (TRN). This made him think that he was now a trainee teacher and no longer a TA; he was one stage closer to 'getting his level' (Wenger, 1998).
- Jake also started looking at teaching posts that were coming up at this point. He said there was 'shock factor' when he found a post that he would be eligible for in his local area.
- His first afternoon teaching alone during his developing placement – it was 'horrendous' in his words, but he felt able to reflect and access support from the

headteacher demonstrating his place in this schools' CoP (Wenger, 1998) and work out how to manage the next day which was far more successful.

- During his developing placement, being asked to be a temporary ICT co-ordinator showing that he was taking advantage of the context to facilitate learning (Burn et al. 2015).
- Upon return to his home school, he felt others did not know what to see him as; TA or trainee teacher.

As above, it can be seen that Jake's own critical events were in the main his own reflections on his transition to teaching. Unlike other participants, these critical events did not seem to rely on others validating his becoming a teacher.

4.4.5 Laura

Laura's view on her place within or outside communities was similar to Jake's in some ways. Whereas Jake presented himself as simply not being in the different communities, Laura spoke about being *between* communities. However, this also could be seen as her seeing herself as not being a member of some groups. She placed herself outside all communities apart from the school community initially, and 12 months later talked about being between the TA and teacher communities. She seemed to hold the view (like Jake perhaps) that she could only properly be in one community at once, but unlike Jake, did recognise that she was being pulled in a number of different directions and found this hard to reconcile. As can be seen in appendix 11, Laura was the only participant (aside from Katie who was by this point working as a UQT) to identify as a teacher before her first teaching placement, and also the only participant to 'go backwards' and suggest in later interviews that she was not a teacher. Of all the participants, she appeared to find the overlapping roles most challenging (figure 5) although unlike Jake, she recognised that she at times had to fulfil a number of roles at once. She readily admitted to 'having meltdowns'- explicit reference to the emotional impact of teacher identity development (Kington and Day, 2008). She spoke particularly of getting herself worked up when assignments were due in and referred to herself as being a 'neat freak' who at these times could not cope if things were out of place. Following one such incident, she spoke at length with her class teacher and said that she was 'wearing three different hats'. She said, 'I am being my TA me, I am being teacher me, and I am trying to do uni me as well. I had too many hats on'. Laura felt very supported by her class teacher who helped her to see this as all her 'hats' being under the umbrella of 'her'. The support of and relationships with others in her home school helped her face dilemmas. This mutual engagement in relationships (Wenger, 1998) was what seemed to support her through the challenges she faced in both her developing and extending placements.

Similarly to Jayne, Laura seemed to need the validation of others to confirm her teacher identity (Danielewicz, 2001) as the course progressed despite an early and perhaps unfounded self confidence in her 'teacher' identity. When she felt 'criticised' by the head teacher who had previously seemed to be someone who she had only received praise from, this caused her upset. This supports Furlong and Maynard's (1995) view that their stages of

progression are not worked though in a linear fashion, and that challenges faced can ‘plunge’ student teachers back to the personal survival stage. This also might support the view that that one aspect of a CoP that she had not learnt in her TA role was that of receiving help or recognising her own level of competence in comparison to others (Wenger, 1998).

4.4.6 Constellations of practice

I also asked participants about their understanding of their place within the trainee teacher 'community', which could be seen as a constellation of practice (Wenger, 1998). At the beginning of their training, all but Laura and Jake drew themselves in the trainee teacher community, but towards the outer edge of the circle. This is perhaps understandable given they were at the start of their training and had a limited understanding of what lay ahead in the course, but that they were enrolled on a teacher training course, so therefore were within that community. They perhaps also recognised that others on the course would be 'in the same boat' or at exactly the same point as them. 12 months later, all put themselves within the trainee teacher community. This perhaps indicates that it was easier for the participants to call themselves something when a label was applied. However, it could also suggest that *trainee teacher* is a more clearly defined and widely recognised identity than that of a TA.

Of less relevance to my research questions was the idea of the university community; I included this to help me gain a greater understanding of what PTS course and the university training meant to the participants to support me in programme delivery in later years. Using this coincided with a university wide focus on 'community' following student surveys indicating this was something with which students across the university felt less satisfied. As the participants spoke about the university community whilst completing their communities sheet, both initially and 12 months later, it was clear that they had little interest in being part of the university community. They saw this as encompassing the university nightlife and living on campus in halls of residence; they had chosen a course that enabled them to continue their TA roles in school and live away from the university, and one which involved being on campus just one day a week at most, and a such were content to not be part of the university community.

4.4.7 Summary

My initial research aims included wanting to know more about when the teacher identity of the TA training to teach formed. In interviews, my participants shared their own views about when they became a teacher, and I specifically asked them what made them the teacher in the final email interview.

What others within the community perceive members to be appears to be very important to identity formation; Jayne felt that she had become a teacher when the head teacher introduced her to parents as the teacher and Laura said:

> 'It may just be me, but I think it's the children that make you their teacher. I mean without them I wouldn't be a teacher anyway. The children rely [on you], and look up to you as their teacher, you build this incredible bond with them and they trust you. Because I am their teacher and we have this bond, I want the very best for them, it makes me want to go the extra mile for them'.

Nicole said that:

> 'Having the responsibility for the class, planning, accountability for progress, parents' evenings and communicating with parents [all contributed to this, but the fact that] the children view me as their teacher even though I was previously their TA'

was what made her a teacher. It was reassuring to see the importance of children's progress noted here when as TAs it had been something that had not been seen as a theme during the time the participants were TAs, aligning with Fuller and Brown's model of teacher development (1970), and stage five of Furlong and Maynard's (1995) model of teacher development.

However, the bigger theme that emerged here was about participants understanding the role of the teacher. Jake said felt that having his own class would have made this clearer:

> 'I have struggled with the start of my career as my first position is an additional teacher for a year group where I do not have my own class, I support the year group. Having your own class, I feel, is a large part of feeling like a teacher. [However, there are times that] I feel that I am a teacher by the children showing me more respect to me than the teaching assistant, [and when] other less qualified/experienced

members of staff come to me for advice on different aspects and want to observe me'.

All reflected on the difference in responsibility between the TA and teacher roles; some had recognised this whilst being TAs, and others realised this during their training. Katie summed this up: 'The buck stops with me. I am the one parents liaise with, complain to, laugh with and seek help from. If I don't know, then it's my job to find out.' As such it can be seen that teacher identity is formed when the trainee is doing the job of the teacher but can only fully appreciate what this role encompasses when they have become the teacher.

I had also been interested to understand how leaving behind aspects of the TA role occurred in the transition to teach. It was difficult to elicit a clear understanding of this. Due to the lack of clarity over what the TA role actually involves (Mansaray, 2006; Clarke and Visser, 2019) and the role creep between the roles of TA and teacher as identified in literature (Blatchford et al., 2009a; Mansaray, 2006), it is likely that the participants (and I) were unable to clearly define when they were no longer TAs. However, this could also be because the participants had not yet entirely left the TA role behind; most discussed not wanting to give up TA tasks, and also demonstrated a reluctance to deploy TAs. However, positive aspects of the TA role that had continued into teaching were noted too; Jake had his TA 'toolbox' to make use of in teaching, and Katie's TAs felt that her success as a teacher was a result of her prior TA role.

5. Discussion

5.1 Being a TA: in what ways do the skills, knowledge and attributes of a TA support or challenge TAs who train to teach?

Participants in my study had in depth, first-hand knowledge of many of the tasks that need to be undertaken in a school by TAs and teachers. This equipped them with the shared repertoire of the CoP or the skills and knowledge of teaching, but also meant they were members of the CoP.

Having been TAs my participants were acutely aware of a lack of confidence teachers have in being able to plan lessons with the firm assurance that allocated TAs would be present; they all spoke of their ability as TAs to be responsive and flexible when they found at a moment's notice that they were to be reallocated to cover for a teacher absence or support a school trip for another class, but this also illustrates that regardless of plans put in place for TAs to be in particular classes or lessons, in practice, they are often required elsewhere in a school. There is little written about this in literature reflecting a recurring theme; researchers seem to accept Blatchford et al.'s (2009) arguments, and literature and policy now reflects the findings of their work, in many schools, however, their recommendations are not wholeheartedly enacted. For example, despite Skipp and Hopwood's (2019) recent review that suggested TAs were now less likely to mainly be deployed to work with lower attaining children, this was something often seen by TAs in my study.
Similarly, literature (Butt and Lowe, 2005; McVittie, 2005; Blatchford 2009a; Radford et al., 2014; Lehane, 2016; Skipp and Hopwood, 2019) endorses schools ensuring TAs and teachers have time to meet, plan and assesses. My participants found that dedicated time for planning between TAs and teachers was rarely provided. In reality, the financial implications of extending TA contracts or providing cover for teachers and TAs to meet regularly is balanced against the feeling that teachers and TAs have individually managed to communicate with sufficient effectiveness in the past.

I argue that this misalignment between theory and practice is due to three reasons.
Firstly, although school leaders understand the theory, what they know in practice, and as evidenced by the range of different models of deployment seen by my participants is that in

individual schools, SLTs rely on their own knowledge of the expertise and experience of their TAs and how they have been effectively utilised to the extent that it would seem counterproductive to change an approach that works in their school with their TAs. Secondly, there is limited funding to ensure TAs and teachers have dedicated time for joint planning and assessment; it is hard to justify the financial impact of facilitating this in the face of headlines which suggest research shows TAs have a detrimental effect on pupil progress. Thirdly, menial tasks have to happen, which is why TAs continue to report that they do put up displays and 'cut and stick'. This seems to be overlooked by Blatchford et al..

By the end of the study, my participants did feel as if they were able to empathise with TAs and had a greater understanding of what TAs might be asked to do. However, they had limited understanding of why TAs were allocated do specific classes. Within literature focussing on deployment, little is written about how TAs are allocated to different classes within schools. Research seemingly labours under the misapprehension that there are always enough TAs for there to be at least one per class, as it fails to consider the decision-making process required to rationalise where individual TAs should be based. Data showed that my participants had an expectation that each class should have a TA, and an expectation among my participants that as new teachers (NQT/ECT), their need for a TA is greater than that of more experienced teachers. Katie had been led to believe that she (as a new and unqualified teacher) would have a TA full-time. This suggested that experience of the teacher could be a factor when TAs were allocated to work with particular teachers. It was also suggested in this school that smaller classes did not need a TA as much as larger classes. In both cases though, where the TAs were deployed seemed to be decided regardless of the needs of the children in the class; the level of experience of the teacher or the size of the class seemed to be the defining factor – so where it was not possible to have a TA in every class, new teachers or senior teachers were allocated a TA, and the bigger the class the more likely it was that a TA would be allocated. This implies that schools are seeing TAs as Teach*er*' Assistants (as in Australia, Butt, 2016), as opposed to Learning and Teach*ing* Assistants who are there to support the teacher's teaching role (Eyres et al., 2014, p. 155), and focus on the needs of the teacher rather than the needs of the children within the class when deploying TAs.

My participants rarely focussed on the pedagogical skills required by TAs. Similarly, literature on TA characteristics (Butt and Lowe, 2012; Wilson and Bedford, 2008) fails to mention pedagogical skills as important traits in TAs, despite research emphasising the importance in effectively deploying TAs in order to impact on children's learning (Blatchford et al., 2009a) or indicating the overlap between the TA and teacher roles (Mansaray, 2006). This implies to me that not only do TAs not recognise pupil progress as being a key part of their role, but also that schools do not ensure TAs understand the part they play in pupil progress. This is perhaps supported by the very patchy induction, appraisal and training for TAs that appears to take place in schools; rarely is pedagogical training provided for TAs.

Although rarely considered in any depth in literature, the short term 'supply teacher' cover that many TAs are expected to fulfil when staff absences occur is of relevance to my participants professional development as teachers. All participants in my study apart from Jayne who had only ever been a volunteer in her school, had often been asked to step in and provide cover for whole classes. While on a short-term basis, some aspects of the teacher role would clearly not be required (for example summative assessments, report writing, accountability for pupil progress), many aspects of the Teacher's Standards could arguably be seen, albeit if not evidenced as 'met' to some extent in a day or two's teaching of a class. This provided my participants with chance to adopt the identity of a teacher (Danielewicz, 2001) during their time as TAs.

Through being TAs, all had a good understanding of different ways in which TAs were deployed to work with children, and all had opinions on what worked best and why; they understood the challenges of planning interventions, fitting them in and feeding back assessments of progress to teacher. The training of teachers to deploy TAs has often been raised in literature (e.g. Blatchford et al., 2009a), but as explained by my participants, what is done and by whom depends on the teacher and the TA. Schools deployed my participants using different ways with most generally being 'partners' or 'conduits for learning', but at sometimes being deployed as 'islands' or 'separate entities' (Slater and Glazeley, 2018). This meant that for much of the time they were in a role in which they could learn 'on the job'. It was harder for them to specify what they had learnt about teaching whilst being TAs, and this was perhaps due to the limited induction and appraisal process that all experienced,

and any formal training that they received, as found by (Cajkler, et al., 2007) was un-coordinated. However, an interesting finding about the deployment of TAs that was not seen in literature was that for my participants who had been TAs themselves, confidence in deploying TAs themselves was low. This was could be due to a number of factors: their lack of confidence as a new teacher; possession of a heightened understanding that while *they* would have been happy to do certain things as TAs, they may not be able to expect others to do the same; and in Katie's case, a feeling that she was conscious of what the TAs – her former peers – would think of her.

My findings reflected literature (Barkham, 2008; Collins and Simco, 2006; Lehane, 2016) which suggested the relationship between teachers and TAs was pivotal to TA effectiveness, with communication and collaboration being at the heart of good teacher-TA relationships (Woolfson and Truswell, 2005; Collins and Simco, 2005), and that the success of collaborative relationships depends on the individual, personal dispositions of the people involved (Lehane, 2016). However, further to this, it was clear that relationships are also pivotal to mutual engagement within a CoP – this is something my participants aligned with being part of a family and it was clear these were formed in different ways and were different in nature; reinforcing the idea that all teachers and all TAs are not the same.

Lesson planning, assessment and behaviour management could be seen as tangible teacher activities that the TAs in my study had gained knowledge of to varying degrees during their time as TAs; all had at least some experience of all of these elements. However, the thing that they had underestimated was that as teachers, they were ultimately responsible for the class. By the very nature of the teacher being responsible for the class, this was something that it was impossible for TAs to experience even partially. Alternatively, evidence of other less tangible teacher characteristics was clearly exhibited in the role of the TA. For example, the ability to be flexible (seen by Dunne et al., 2008 as an essential TA characteristic) and resilient (identified as an important teacher characteristic by Glazzard, 2016; Twiselton and Goepel, 2018, and deemed to be integral to teacher identity formation (Kington and Day, 2008)) were all enhanced while being a TA; all shared stories of being 'thrown about school' and being able to adapt quickly in a range of situations.

My study shows that while TAs are well placed to observe and experience the skills of teaching, and to learn about key aspects of the teaching role 'on the job', the aspects that were most valuable were intangible skills related to being part of a CoP, adding weight to Wenger's ideas about social learning within a CoP. The majority of participants were seen by others in the community, particularly children, to be members of the teaching team, a phrase explicitly used in Katie's school. Although 'role creep' is presented in literature as negative and unhelpful in its ambiguity (Blatchford et al., 2009a), it was an idea that my participants saw as positive; and through a lens of CoPs can be seen as legitimate peripheral participation within a learning community (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

As seen in figure 6, my findings seem to suggest that trainee teachers who have been TAs are in a unique position; their experience as TAs has allowed them to collect a 'TA toolkit' which provides them with some of the knowledge and skills required to teach along with an understanding of how to participate in a school CoP.

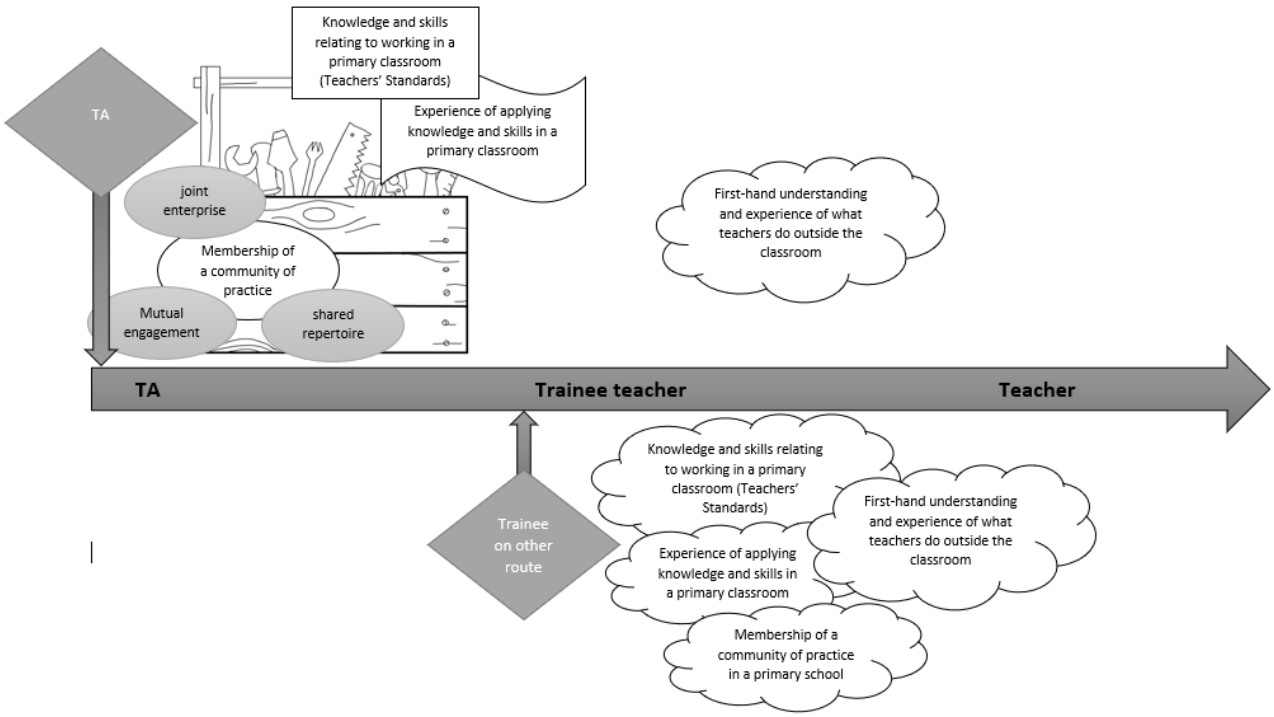

Figure 6– How does being a TA support or challenge TAs training to teach?

5.2 Training to teach: How does the experience of being part of a school community impact on TAs who are becoming teachers?

My data showed that TAs view themselves as part of the school community but did not perceive themselves to be as central to the community as teachers; the three participants who secured teaching jobs in their 'home' schools after training positioned themselves more centrally in the school community once they had completed their training. This suggests that their place in a CoP differs from that of trainee teachers on other routes.

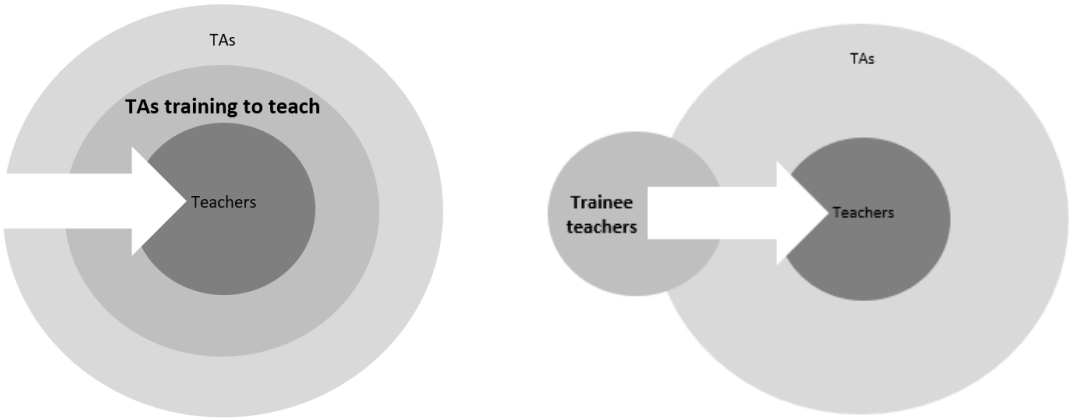

Figure 7 - Where do TAs training to teach, and trainee teachers on other routes, fit in a school CoP?

As a TA, to different degrees, my participants were able to engage in joint enterprise within their schools' CoP. Their exposure to local responses to teacher workload allowed them insight into this aspect of teaching, arguably far more so than trainees on other routes into teaching, although in most of my participants' cases, the 'hidden' teacher workload was still underestimated. Once they had qualified, my participants also expressed lack of confidence in how to deploy TAs – they felt they could empathise with the TAs and see things from their perspective but having been TAs themselves did not give them the ability to effectively deploy TAs. This seemed to be one of the biggest challenges faced by TAs becoming teachers. TA deployment appeared to have been the root of critical events for at least two participants who had in their minds been promised that a TA would be deployed to work

with them as they became teachers. When this failed to materialise, the participants who were by this point teachers, felt disappointed and unsupported. While Wenger (1998) recognised mutual engagement was complex 'a mixture of power and dependence…success and failure… authority and collegiality' (p. 77) and did not mean that all members opinions were the same, what came across to these new teachers as a conscious withholding of support at what could be seen as a vulnerable point in their transition from TA to teacher damaged their feelings of membership of the community.

I argue that the benefit that being part of one school CoP also provided was understanding that supported them when in other schools on placement. Their mutual engagement in their home school CoP facilitated insight into the social complexity of a school CoP which helped them understand how to find a place within another school's CoP. Similarly, shared repertoire not only allowed participants to gain knowledge of the routines, and ways of doing things within the community, but enabled them to use these to negotiate meaning in both their own school as their professional identity changed, but also in other school placements.

5.3 Reflecting on a change in professional identity: How and when is the teacher identity of the TA training to teach formed?

When do TAs become teachers?

Appendix 11 illustrates my participants ideas about when they became teachers. Combining this with their views about the tasks that TAs do, and their place within a school's CoP, it is possible to propose a model that summarises the difference between the point of qualification (X in Figure 10) and how individuals roles overlap. It might be expected that a trainee on this route is a TA until they qualify teach. However, data from this study supports my experience of working with TAs training to teach on this route; there is rarely a clear point at which they 'become a teacher', and if it is recognisable event, this does this coincide neatly with the point at which they attain QTS.

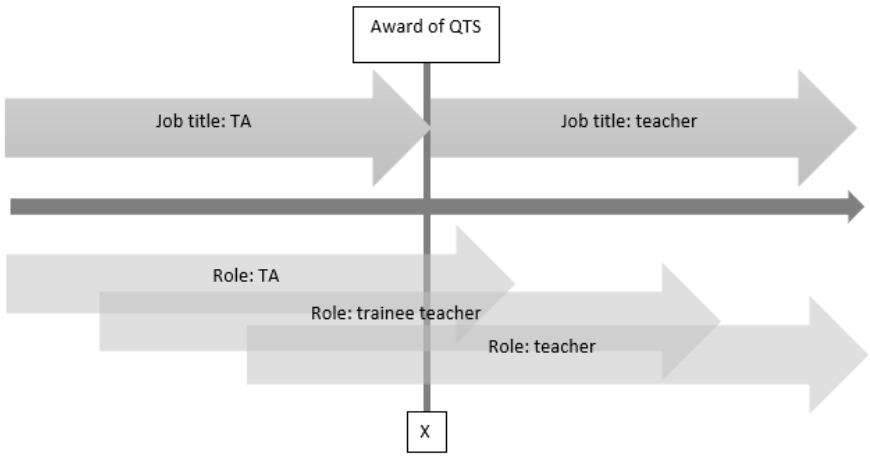

Figure 5 - TAs training to teach. A trajectory.

My findings showed within their home school CoP, relationships were crucial to the participants' perceptions about support which can be seen to be part of mutual engagement. My participants articulated an inextricable link between their feelings about being part of a community, having access to support and being happy. In relation to literature that shows that feelings of autonomy impact on becoming a teacher (Furlong and Maynard, 1995; Twiselton and Goepel, 2018), it was apparent that by being part of a CoP, a TA is already in possession of a toolkit of resources that support their transition to teacher (as in Figure 11). I argue that this inspires a level of mentor trust that perhaps comes a little later for trainees on other routes. As such, mentors 'leave them to it' earlier, giving a

greater sense of autonomy, and opportunity to 'act the part' (Danielewicz, 2001) of the teacher sooner. This is illustrated in figure 13.

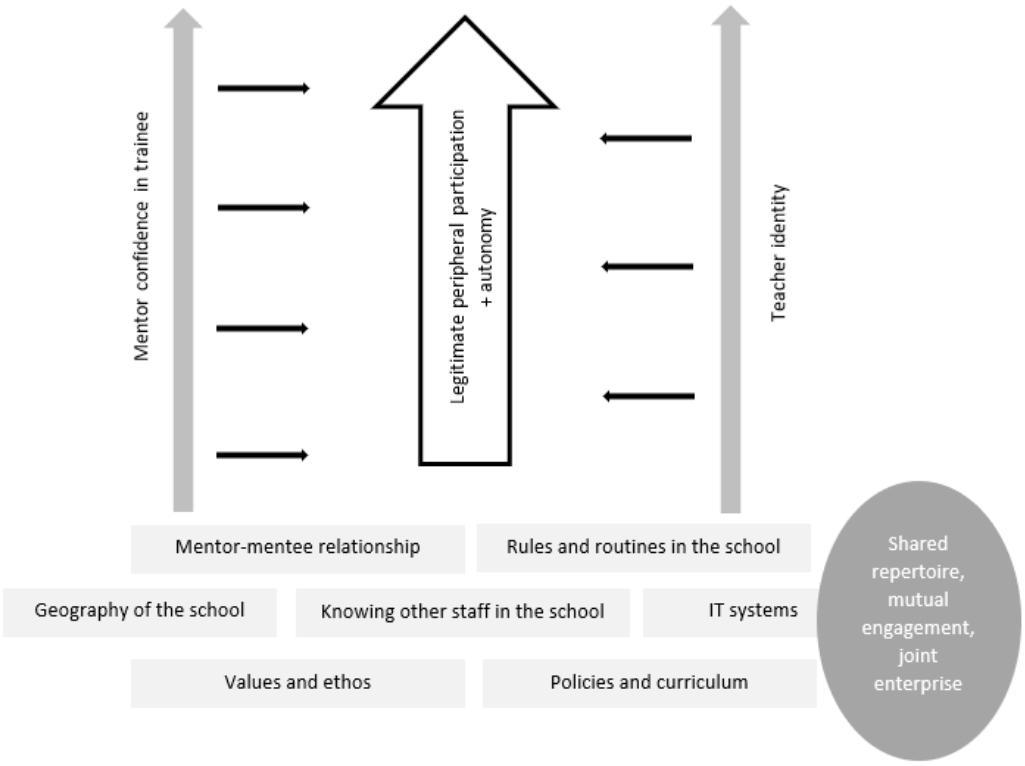

Figure 8 - *The impact of mentor confidence on teacher identity formation*

It was hard to elicit what my participants left behind from their own role as TAs. The overlap between the two roles as seen in literature (e.g. Blatchford et al., 2009) was supported in my findings. They acknowledged that they were experiencing the increased level of responsibility and workload that came with being a teacher as they neared qualification, but they were reluctant to give up some of the tasks that they would have done as a TA and did not generally acknowledge that delegation of some tasks would ease their workload. Over time, my participants' views of what it meant to be a TA had changed, reflecting the ever-shifting understanding of what the role of the TA should encompass as seen in literature (Clayton, 1993; Johnson, 2018) but also acknowledging my participants' transition from TA to teacher; as they became teachers, their view of TAs evolved and they acquired an additional, more external perspective about the role of the TA.

My findings showed that for my participants, there was no one single event that indicated to them that they had become a teacher. Rather, their existing professional identity changed, and on reflection, they were able to say that by a certain point – for example being introduced as the teacher or collecting the children from the playground on the first day as their teacher, they had become a teacher. For most, some of the many events that contributed to becoming a teacher relied on the validation of others. Similarly, when my participants felt they had been negatively judged by others, or felt there was a lack of support or encouragement from others, this led to feelings of self-doubt; reaffirmations from others enabled this to be overcome.

Because of the flexible, multifaceted nature of identity, it is not easily definable and also cannot be the same for everyone. I argue that teacher identity is more about 'my teacher identity' or 'your teacher identity' than what teacher identity is for everyone. Identity is about a person's own perception of what makes them who they are. It helps a person explain their own life, their place within it and helps them move forward through their life. For TAs training to teach an understanding of identity is particularly important because while some changes in identity perhaps happen gradually or in small increments, TAs training to teach are experiencing significant change in role in a relatively short space of time from TA, to trainee teacher and then to teacher. Research shows that identity formation is a very challenging process. It could be argued that TAs becoming teachers may not have comparatively as big a gap to bridge as those entering the teaching profession from an unrelated field, or as a student who has recently completed their own schooling. However, my research shows that the TAs in my study considered themselves as members of the TA community in their schools, and at times as teachers. This 'blurred' boundary between the role of teacher and TA as acknowledged in literature (Mansaray, 2006, Blatchford et al., 2009a) could result in additional challenges for TAs training to teach in that they are less able to easily leave behind aspects of their previous role. Rather than seeing teacher identity as something different to TA identity, perhaps it is more appropriate to consider both teachers and TAs to have a 'teach*ing* identity'. This both recognises the dynamic and multifaceted nature of theories of identity, the diversity in the personal and individual identities of TAs and teachers, and also explains why TAs can become teachers perhaps more fluently than trainee teachers who have not been TAs previously.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present my key findings, recapping on my research questions and summarising how these have been answered, as well as presenting some other findings that have arisen. I will consider recommendations and implications of my study and the contribution to knowledge made. I will also consider limitations of the study and further research that is planned.

6.2 Key findings

- **Being a TA: in what ways do the skills, knowledge and attributes of a TA support or challenge TAs who train to teach?**

The journey taken by my participants incorporates their past and future to allow them to renegotiate their present identity (Wenger, 1998, p. 155). Consideration of their journey enabled me to consider Wenger's (1998, p. 168) suggestion that leaving behind aspects of another community, or as he called it 'boundary crossing', could be challenging; in this leaving behind the role of the TA as my participants became teachers. Wenger (1998, p. 6) felt that boundary crossing provides opportunities for transformative learning, or more effective learning to take place. As such, my participants' past was important as they negotiated their new role as teachers, but also provided a situation in which they were able to begin to cross boundaries, and therefore engage in learning as their teacher identity developed.

What TAs do is diverse and undefined, with little training other than 'on the job' experiential learning provided for TAs and teachers to negotiate a frequently studied but unquantifiable and poorly defined role (Johnson, 2018; Clarke and Visser, 2019). Despite research recommending otherwise (Blatchford, 2009, Russell et al., 2013), schools deploy TAs in a wide variety of ways and this seems to depend on individual skills and expertise, and on individual TA-teacher partnerships.

My findings relating to my first research question ***Being a TA: in what ways do the skills, knowledge and attributes of a TA support or challenge TAs who train to teach?*** can be broken into two categories:

What have I learnt about the role of the TA?

- TAs have enhanced knowledge of the tasks undertaken in schools by teachers and TAs, and engaging in these tasks demonstrates their membership of a CoP.
- Research still fails to 'draw a line' between the role of teacher and TA.
- The DISS authors made various recommendations, but these are not enacted wholeheartedly: there remains limited induction or in-house training for TAs; little evidence of training of teachers for TA deployment and; time is rarely planned in to enable better communication and collaborative planning between teachers and TAs.
- Schools do understand the recommendations of Blatchford et al., but in practice: SLTs capitalise on the individual skills, experience and characteristics of TAs meaning that deployment cannot be restricted to a common approach; financial constraints result in there being limited or no time for TAs to plan and teach with teachers.
- Who (i.e. teacher, TA or someone else) does the so called 'menial' tasks in schools is not identified in literature, or in individual schools' policies.
- There is little written in literature about TAs covering classes when teachers are absent for reasons other than PPA, despite this being common practice in schools.
- TA allocation across the school is not considered in literature, but my research shows that decisions about where TAs are allocated may depend on: class sizes – the bigger the class, the more the teacher needs a TA; teacher experience – the less experienced the teacher, the more likely it is that they will have a TA; or the leadership responsibilities of the teacher – the deputy might have a TA when other teachers do not to allow them to leave the class with the TA for short periods. This suggests TAs are used as Teach*er* Assistants, rather than Teach*ing* Assistants.
- TAs do not talk about their part in pupil progress or pedagogy, suggesting that this is not made explicit by school leaders and perhaps this is could be a result of the limited TA CPD and appraisal which was seen in my study.

What have I learnt about how being a TA supports participants in becoming teachers?

- What is effectively short-term supply cover is carried out by many TAs, and for my participants and trainee teachers on this route into teaching, this gives them opportunity to 'play the part' of a teacher, supporting the development of their teacher identity.
- TAs had a greater understanding of TA deployment than what might be expected of other trainee teachers. However, when it came to them deploying TAs themselves, they lacked confidence due to 'overthinking' what they would have been happy to do as a TA themselves and whether they could expect this of all TAs.
- Collaborative relationships between TAs and teachers are widely seen to be pivotal in research; these also exemplify what mutual engagement in a CoP means in a primary school.
- TAs were able to learn about and experience some aspects of teaching for example, lesson planning, assessment and behaviour management, and demonstrate teacher characteristics such as flexibility and resilience. Truly taking responsibility for the class was something they had understandably not experienced or fully grasped before becoming teachers; they felt unprepared to manage workload.
- Being a TA enables individuals to build a 'toolkit' that can be used when teaching.

Secondly, I considered: ***Training to teach: How does the experience of being part of a school community impact on TAs who are becoming teachers?***

What have I learnt about the impact of CoPs on TAs who are training to teach?

- Feeling supported in a CoP contributes to enjoyment and confidence in both TAs and new teachers.
- Those in senior leadership roles do not always have sufficient time to ensure effective mentoring support.
- School 'families' and relationships within CoPs are important as they provide informal support and peer support that last even when members take up roles in other schools.

  Being part of the staffroom culture is important to becoming part of a CoP and contributes to being part of the school 'family' or CoP.

- Where communication is lacking, this is a root cause of lack of engagement in joint enterprise.
- Despite engaging in the joint enterprise of the school, some TAs did not fully appreciate the workload involved in teaching, even in the schools in which they had previously been TAs, suggesting the true workload of teachers is perhaps hidden even from those working closely with them.
- Teachers who have been TAs do not feel confident to deploy TAs; TAs knew from their previous role that they needed to learn how to deploy TAs but saw that TA deployment requires negotiation and that different TAs needed to be deployed in different ways.
- TAs who had become teachers could not explain what the training for TA deployment might involve.
- Understanding of a TAs' own schools' shared repertoire informed views about teaching and supported their temporary membership of other school CoPs.

My research suggests that exposure to the wide range of skills and knowledge my participants had learnt as TAs provided a good basis for teacher training. TAs see themselves as part of the school CoP but tend to see their place as less central to that of teachers. An 'apprenticeship of observation' before their teacher training also provides TAs with authentic engagement with a CoP that enables TAs to engage in the shared repertoire, joint enterprise and mutual engagement of a primary school. In particular, the relationships formed within CoPs gives TAs who are training to teach an advantage not only in their 'home' school, but also when engaging in placements in other schools.

My final research question was: ***Reflecting on a change in professional identity: How and when is the teacher identity of the TA training to teach formed?***

Wenger argued that identity and membership of a community were inseparable concepts, with identity being the 'pivot between the social and the individual' (Wenger, 1998, p. 145). Identity is 'negotiated by doing the job…[and] is shaped by belonging to a community' (Wenger, 1998, p. 146). As such, when a teacher identity is formed for TAs training to teach is inextricably linked with their membership of CoPs. Reflecting existing research

(Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Dahl, 2020), my research showed that identity is ever changing and multifaceted. Also, I found that:

- TAs become teachers at different points; teacher identity formation is not dependent on achieving qualifying standards.
- How others see them is important to the identity development of TAs training to teach and is central to the professional identity development of this group of new teachers.
- Being part of a CoP in a school does not fully prepare even experienced TAs for the realities of teaching.
- Unsurprisingly, TAs do not feel they have become a teacher at a fixed point, aligning with research that considers teacher identity development (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Dahl, 2020; Bejiard, 1995) and research that considers the process of training to teach (Furlong and Maynard (1995).
- By being part of a CoP, TAs are in position which enables existing trusting and informed relationships within the school to be built upon rather than 'starting from scratch'. I argue this results in teachers giving TAs who are training to teach more autonomy earlier in their training, and as such contributes to their developing teacher identity.
- By the time my participants had started teaching roles, they had begun to somewhat reluctantly admit that some things that they had done when they were TAs needed to be delegated to others, supporting the view in literature that identity change is challenging (Hogden and Askew 2007; Androusou and Tsafos, 2018; Rodrigues and Mogarro, 2019).
- Identity is flexible and multifaceted, so it is challenging to attempt to define it generally. It can vary for an individual over time. When combining this versatile concept with the blurred boundary between TA and teacher, I argue that TAs and teachers could both be seen to have a 'teach*ing* identity' rather than having to adopt either a teach*er* or a TA identity.

6.3 Recommendations and implications

Although research into the impact of follow up work from DISS and the MITA trial is due for publication (MITA, n.d. b), it remains to be seen whether this will provide a definitive national understanding of the role of the TA or identify specific training for TAs and for teachers in the deployment of TAs. It seems that it would be important to also address the question of why many schools and teachers choose not follow the recommendations of extensive research that shows: teachers should deploy TAs to with children of all abilities rather than mainly with lower attaining pupils – but they do not do this consistently; teachers need to be trained to deploy TAs effectively – but they are not; TAs should be adequately prepared and trained – but they are not; schools should facilitate adequate time for TAs and teachers to communicate, plan and assess collaboratively – but they do not.

As part of further research into the deployment of TAs, consideration of TAs' understanding of their pedagogical role is recommended; rarely did my participants reflect on their part in pupil progress or learning suggesting that there is further work to be done by school leaders to ensure TAs see this as a priority.

I argue that role definition will remain an area for debate while post-DISS research continues to focus on the pedagogical role of TAs rather than developing the idea that TAs do support teachers in myriad ways. This is because teachers and school leaders continue to make decisions about TA deployment based not on the recommendations of research, but on their own knowledge of the TAs in their school.

However, accepting that the TA role cannot be defined does present challenges:

- for teachers who have no definitive understanding of what they can ask TAs to do,
- for SLTs who cannot support TAs with effective induction and CPD to support their development,
- for SLTs and teacher educators who cannot base training for teachers in the deployment of TAs on agreed role descriptors, and
- for teacher educators designing programmes that specifically train TAs to teach; as the TA role is not generalisable, training to teach from this prior experience requires greater personalisation than in routes where limited experience and understanding at enrolment are expected as the norm.

Alongside acknowledging and accepting that what TAs do varies, the term 'teaching assistant' may also require reconsideration. 'Teacher assistant' as utilised in Australia (Butt, 2016) as opposed to 'teaching assistant' currently widely used in the UK, appears to be a more appropriate term to reflect what research shows TAs do; it recognises that teachers are responsible for pupils' learning and progress (e.g. Blatchford et al., 2009a), but might better encompass the fact that teachers' assistants fulfil a much wider role within a school community - in carrying out many tasks that cannot be seen as pedagogical (Kerry, 2005; Butt and Lowe, 2012), they are assisting the teach*er*, rather than assisting the teach*ing*.

By accepting this proposed change in terminology, it is perhaps easier to acknowledge the fact that TAs, teachers and schools are all different, and to legitimise the idea that a 'one size fits all' approach to training or deployment is unhelpful.

6.4 Contribution to knowledge

Claim 1: Findings about TAs

Supporting the findings of Skipp and Hopwood (2019), some aspects of the work of Blatchford et al. appear to have had an impact in primary schools, but other recommendations are not being wholeheartedly applied in schools.

TAs are members of school CoPs but see their membership as less central than teachers.

TAs and teachers accept that TAs are often required to cover for teacher absence – this has potential impact on the pedagogical choices made by teachers, and consequently on pupil learning.

SLTs allocate TAs to classes based on teacher capability or likelihood of needing cover.

Lack of induction and appraisal may explain why TAs do not explicitly reference their role in pupil learning.

Claim 2: Findings about TAs training to teach

Contribution to local knowledge:

My study has already provided invaluable insight into the programme design for my own students; reflecting on the features of the diverse journeys of my participants with new cohorts of students has enabled them to have a better understanding of their development as teachers.

In the process of planning the programme for future years, specific input has been included to support trainees with the complexities of understanding their changing professional identity, the workload of teachers, developing their understanding of how to deploy TAs and where possible, advice and encouragement in choice of mentors in school given.

Contribution to the field:

There is no published research which specifically discusses TAs becoming teachers indicating this study can make a significant contribution to knowledge in the field of teacher education.

I argue that is not being a TA *per se* that influences TAs' potential to teach, but a combination of individual professional experiences, place within a school community and personal identity development journeys that prepare them for teacher training. Hence, not all TAs can be teachers, but some are well-prepared to teach.

A contentious issue within the field of teacher education is the place that HEIs provide in the training of teachers (Carter, 2015); this particular route into teaching might be seen as a hybrid between an undergraduate route which necessitates a focus on the academic aspects of the degree as well as the training in school, and a postgraduate route with a greater proportion of the course and perhaps therefore greater emphasis on training in schools. My participants spoke only in very limited terms about the impact of university-based learning on professional identity formation, and this is something that may deserve further research in order to raise the profile of a specific TA to teacher route identified in teacher recruitment policy.

Claim 3: Methodological contributions to knowledge

Use of TA voice is used in some research about the role of TAs, however there is no published research which considers the role of the TA from the perspective of teachers who have been TAs and therefore have a unique dual perspective about important issues such as role, deployment, and training (both of TAs and for teachers in using TAs effectively).

6.5 Consideration of methodological approach and limitations

While any study with five participants cannot be seen to be generalisable in the generally accepted sense, this was not the aim of this study which instead investigated individual truths and the complexity of human-centred worldviews (Webster and Mertova, 2007). While a narrative inquiry methodological approach may be seen to present limitations in terms of validity and reliability, Huberman's (1995) work supports the view that a narrative inquiry approach allows for access, honesty, verisimilitude, authenticity and transferability of findings rather than reliability or validity in the traditional sense.

However, using narrative inquiry did present some limitations in terms of findings:

My study did not provide scope to make direct comparisons with trainees on other routes; any references to how trainees on other routes negotiate their place within a CoP and how their identity changes is based on anecdotal evidence; larger scale, quantitative data may provide more generalisable data to make conclusions about TAs' preparedness to teach in comparison to those entering training with limited or no prior experience other than their own time as a pupil.

Similarly, perceptions about TAs training to teach here are based solely on the views of the TAs themselves – further insight about how TAs become teachers would be gained from discussions with mentors in both the school in which they were employed as TAs and at placement schools.

6.6 Future research

Further research may consider the following:

Schools and teachers do value their TAs (Mansaray, 2006; Fraser and Meadows, 2008) and what they do, and this is perhaps why they are reluctant to fully embrace the recommendations of large-scale qualitative studies which seem to encourage uniformity but research into *why* schools do not wholeheartedly follow the recommendations of research may begin to support the development of TA deployment in the future.

A key aspect that I chose not to consider in depth due to word count limitation was the role of the mentor. However, my research showed that where placements took place in my participants' home schools, participants did not feel they had access to the mentoring support they expected. This can possibly be explained by the school's expectations; both Nicole and Katie were seen to be 'outstanding' graded trainees, and as such in comparison to new and unknown new teachers in the school, their SLTs may have decided to prioritise more intensive mentor support elsewhere. However, another similarity here was that by the end of my study, both participants were considering a future elsewhere – in my final communication with Katie she explained she was being interviewed at another school that had already offered her a job in the past. Of particular significance regarding retention, Nicole was contemplating leaving teaching altogether. While there is no evidence that lack of support is the sole contributor in either case, this seems to align with the DfE's latest plans for the Early Career Framework for new teachers which promises to 'providing a funded entitlement to a structured 2-year package of high-quality professional development (DfE, 2021c). The significance of mentoring of early career teachers within a CoP is something that requires further consideration and research.

Consideration of TAs' understanding of their pedagogical role is recommended – rarely did my participants reflect on their part in pupil progress or learning suggesting that there is further work to be done by school leaders to ensure TAs see this as a priority.

A dip in confidence or commitment was seen in most of my participants following the award of QTS suggesting that further research into the longer-term identity development of TAs becoming teachers is needed; ethical approval has been granted by my employing HEI to

carry out further research into the careers of teachers who were previously TAs, including the participants in this study.

As above, further research which compares the teacher identity development of trainee teachers who do not have an existing membership of a CoP to those that do, alongside a longitudinal study into the retention of teachers who were initially TAs would provide further evidence to consider whether the TA to teacher route has benefits over more traditional routes into teaching.

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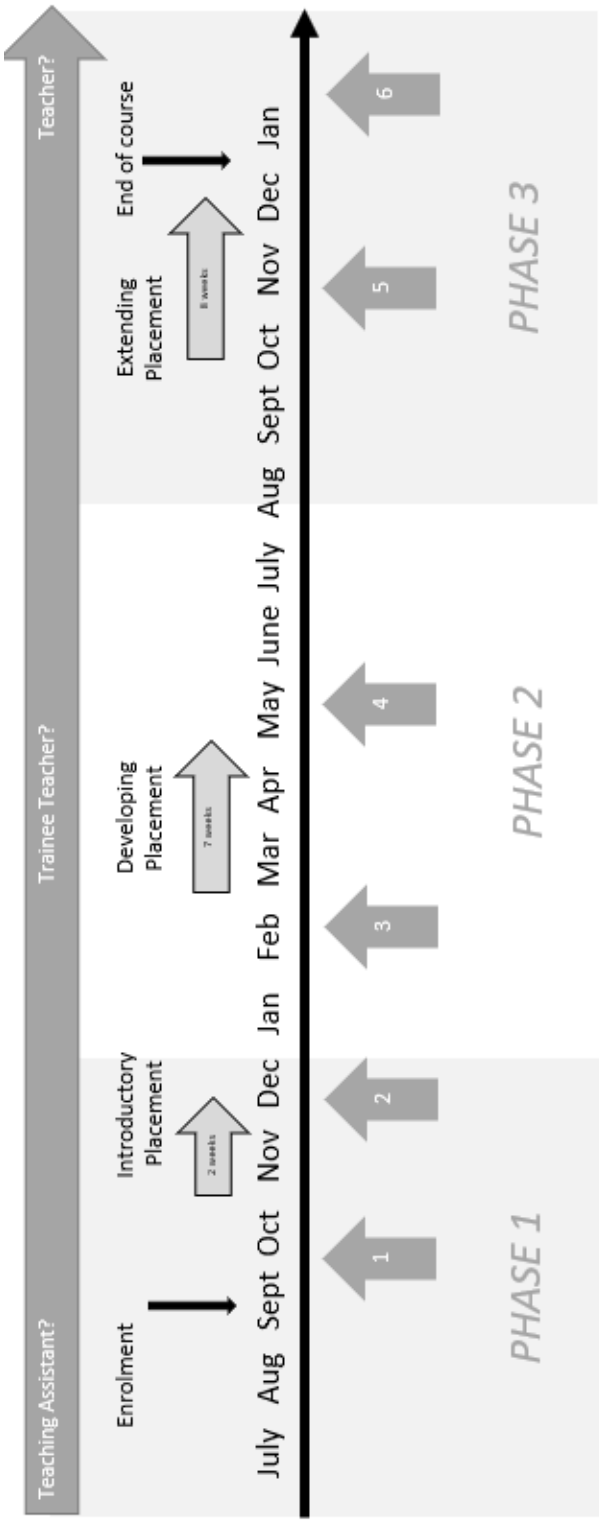
APPENDIX 1

The TA tasks listed below could, to a greater or lesser extent, be seen to align with aspects of the tasks that teachers do.

Task	1 Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils	2 Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils	3 Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge	4 Plan and teach well-structured lessons	5 Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils	6 Make accurate and productive use of assessment	7 Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment	8 Fulfil wider professionalresponsibilities
Sharpen pencils	✓							
Creates/prepares resources and tidies up	✓							
Makes and plays games				✓				
Photocopies	✓							
Laminate/ cuts things out	✓							
Help children stay on task					✓			
Modify activities to cater for children's needs					✓			
Help children to read	✓			✓	✓			
Listen to children read	✓			✓				
Work with children with SEN	✓	✓		✓	✓			
Supporting individual pupils (including 'if stuck')		✓		✓	✓			
Maintain assessment records						✓		
Support teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Take small groups for specific subjects or groups with SEN			✓		✓			✓
Settle the children	✓						✓	
Keep children focussed	✓			✓	✓			
Support behaviour management							✓	
Provide modelling	✓		✓	✓				
Corrects children's work				✓	✓			
Explains things			✓	✓		✓		
Supervising classes / covering for teacher absence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lunchtime activities	✓							✓
After school clubs	✓							✓
Pastoral support	✓							✓
Taking registers								✓
Running errands								✓
Putting up displays	✓							
Menial tasks – e.g. paint pot washing	✓							✓
Marking work		✓			✓	✓		
Supporting children's physical and/or medical needs		✓			✓			
Making cups of tea								✓
Teaches children		✓		✓	✓			
Helps children on the computer		✓		✓	✓			

APPENDIX 2

Phases of data collection



Documentary data were collected in some interviews.
Online eRPD reflections were considered during Extending placements in advance of interview 6.
Stories and transcribed interview data were shared between interview 5 and 6.

APPENDIX 3
Laura

Laura had always wanted to teach, but wanted a practical route into teaching, so she began by becoming an apprentice teaching assistant following a Level 3 college course. The school were very keen to keep her after her placements finished, and very soon she was employed as a full time TA there. The school, a medium sized primary school north of Lincoln, is part of a small academy chain, and Laura saw this as a 'family' with TAs and teachers all getting on well together; she felt she was very much a part of this community.

She felt her role as a TA was very equal to the teacher with whom she worked, and she got on well with this teacher. As a TA, she felt that there were very few differences between the roles that she and the teacher undertook, but by the time she was nearing the end of the course and saw the TA/teacher role from the teacher's perspective, she talked about finding the additional responsibility and accountability she now had as a teacher as a little bit scary; 'I am the only person to blame!'

She expressed some anxiety about going to other schools for placement - she had not worked as a TA in any other schools before this school. As it turned out, she ended up doing both main placements (developing and extending) in schools which were part of a group all lead by the same head teacher. This had its challenges; Laura's home school was seen by the head teacher and staff across all three schools as the 'golden school'. When Laura went to her developing placement school, the head teacher almost used her as a 'spy in the camp'. This helped her get through the placement though – she said it was 'horrendous' and found it challenging as things were so different from what she had expected. However, the staff there did accept her as the teacher, and offered her advice and support.

At the very last minute in the summer term, the head teacher offered her an unqualified teaching post at the third school in the group to start from September, and as such, her extending placement took place there too. Two months into this job she loved her class, got on well with both TAs (particularly one of them) and felt very happy 'once the classroom door was closed'. However, there was very little sense of community in the school – Laura felt that nobody talked to each other, there was very limited giving and receiving of help, no common understanding of what mattered and ways of doing things were not discussed, and she did not enjoy being at the school.

In terms of CoPs, Laura experienced three quite diverse communities during her training; her 'family' in her home school, the supportive staff but very alien ways of doing things in her developing placement school and in her extending placement, where she felt there was 'no community', an environment which felt lonely and provided little support. She said that if a job came up at her home school, she would 'be gone, straightaway' and said that she still felt that in the future she would like to teach there or somewhere like there. It seemed that the relationships in her original school had been very important to her and she felt part

of a strong community in which members helped each other, made things work for them and had a shared history and understanding of how to do things.

A very interesting perspective that Laura had about her identify was around the different roles she had to fulfil. Laura had felt stressed with the many pressures of school and university during the course and this led to a discussion with her very supportive class teacher at her home school. They reflected that training to teach on the PTS programme was very much like wearing three hats at once; at times she was a teacher, a TA and a university student, and she also spoke about 'sacrificing' time at home with her partner. The work required to wear all of these hats at once was daunting until she organised a timetable for herself to help her to cope, but it was hard to juggle priorities during her training.

She felt there were fewer hats to wear by the time she was employed as an UQT – the 'scarf' of the extending placement requirements was still there, but her main 'hat' was simply now her teacher hat. However, she had a number of 'meltdowns' since September due to feeling unsupported, lonely, undervalued and at times criticised within her employing school community.

She spoke further about her identity as a teacher – she felt an important part of the job was being a role model for children, even when she wasn't in school. She talked about herself as a 'teacher' from even early on in the course. However, when it later came to really seeing herself as 'the teacher', she said that until she collected her children from the playground on the first day, she didn't feel as if she was 'the teacher'. She said, 'I had to *be* their teacher before I *was* their teacher'.

Laura's desire to do the best for the children was evident from the very start of her training when she talked about how well a particular child had done in some assessments. This continued throughout the course – she wanted to ensure she knew every single child in her class and worked hard to ensure she could confidently and knowledgeably report on each child's progress. She had a strong philosophy regarding children needing to know things more widely than just what was in the National Curriculum. She felt she had developed her commitment to children's progress 'on the job' as a TA working closely with children (particularly lower attaining pupils) and getting to know them well. She loved the times when it was just her and her class; her little family within but away from the rest of the school.

She said early on that she was quite a resilient person, and by the end of this chapter of her teaching career story, it seemed her resilience was being tested more than ever. In the final stages of her training she was anticipating the arrival of a new head teacher and hoped that this may change the way things were working in the school, however, her hopes for the future were that she would soon be able to teach in a school like her first school which she saw very much as a family.

APPENDIX 4

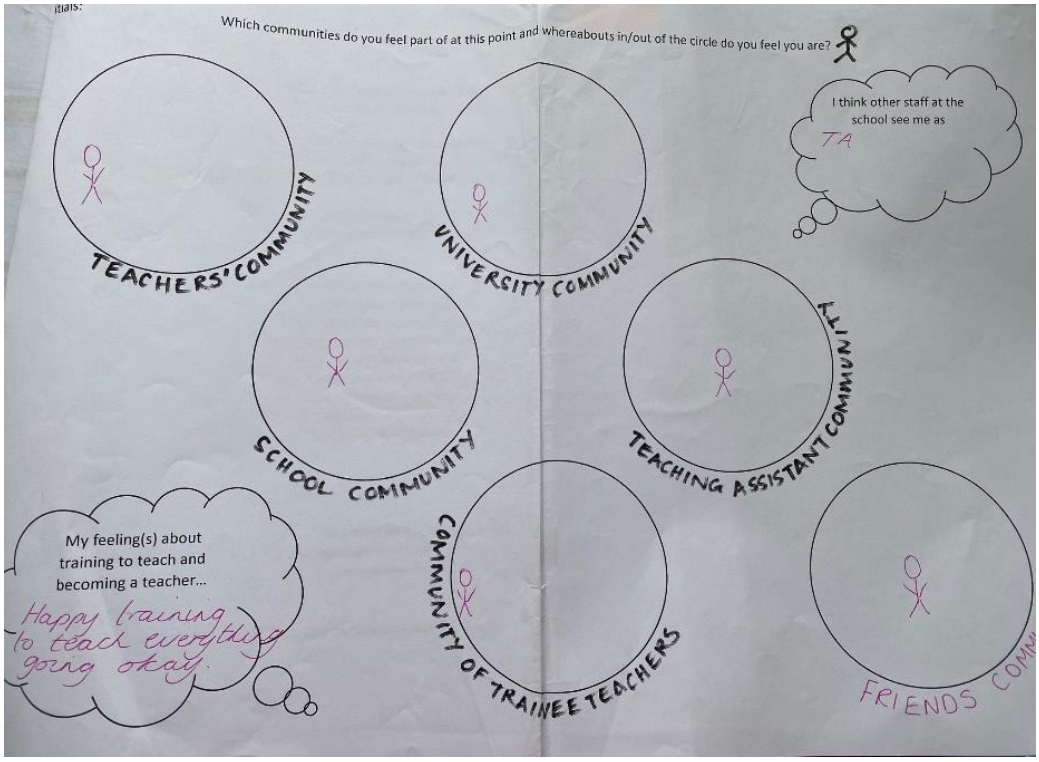
Initially organised by frequency 'teachers' was chosen following first interview. In both first (completed during the first interview at the beginning of the course) and last (completed 16 months later by email in lieu of a final reflection discussion) categorisation tasks, these were presented in random order.

Tasks	WM		KJ		LE		JF		AF		LJ
	first	last	first	last	first	last	first	last	first	last	only
write lesson plans	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers
write reports	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers
track pupil progress	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers
analyse test data	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers
mark work	both	both	teachers	both	teachers	both	teachers	both	both	both	teachers
order equipment	teachers	both	both	teachers	teachers	neither	teachers	teachers	teachers	both	neither
lead classes	teachers	teachers	teachers	both	teachers	teachers	both	teachers	both	both	teachers
plan activities or lessons and prepare teaching materials	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	both	both	teachers
talk to parents about progress at parent's evenings	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers
act as specialist for particular subjects	TAs	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	both	both	teachers	teachers	teachers
carry out assessments	both	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	both	teachers	both	teachers	teachers
investigate pupil absence	both	neither	teachers	teachers	teachers	neither	neither	both	both	both	neither
prepare children for assessments	both	both	both	both	teachers	teachers	both	both	both	teachers	teachers
supervise other staff	both	both	teachers	teachers	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	both	teachers	neither
carry out administrative tasks	teachers	teachers	TAs	both	both	teachers	both	both	both	both	both
run afterschool clubs	both	both	teachers	both	both	both	TAs	both	both	both	both
solve IT problems	TAs	both	both	neither	both	both	both	both	teachers	both	both
supervise group activities	both	both	teachers	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
collect money for trips etc.	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	teachers	both	both	both
explain things	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
get the classroom ready for lessons	both	both	both	teachers	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
help children who need extra support to complete tasks	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
help with outings and sports events	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
listen to children read	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
look after children who are upset or have had accidents	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
make cups of tea	both	both	both	neither	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
manage class behaviour	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
support children with SEN	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
support learning activities	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
take part in training sessions	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
tell stories	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
mark registers	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
photocopy	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
clear away materials and equipment after lessons	both	both	TAs	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
organise of make teaching resources	both	both	TAs	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
put up displays	both	both	both	TAs	both	both	both	both	TAs	both	both
Total 'teachers'	5	8	14	12	12	12	9	11	8	9	11
Total 'both'	29	27	19	21	24	22	25	25	27	27	22
Total 'TAs'	2	0	3	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Total 'neither'	0	1	0	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
Number of changes between first and last.		8		12		6		6		6	n/a

APPENDIX 5

Participants were asked at the beginning and the end of their training to draw a stick figure of themselves within various circles that represented CoPs.

An example of this document is shown here:

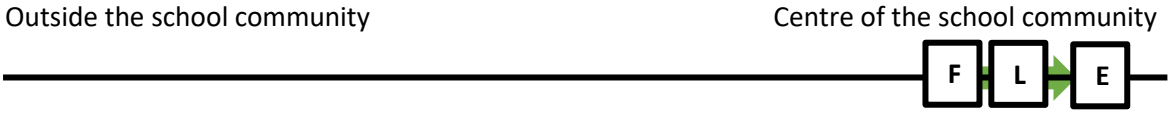


To enable comparisons to be made here, I measured the distance from the centre of the circle and translated the participants' position in the circle to a scale as below.

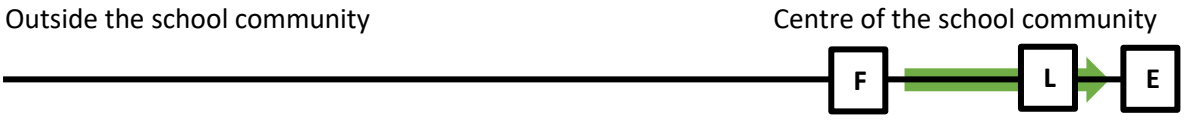
School community:
F = first interview, L = 12 months later, E = End of training

Jayne began as a volunteer TA in her home school with no expectation of employment at any point. Was offered an NQT post at her home school one term before the end of the course to commence at the end of the course.

Nicole was a paid TA in her home school and was fairly confident of securing a teaching post within the academy chain during or at the end of her training. She was offered an UQT post during the course to commence in the final term of the course and become an NQT post at the end of the course.



Katie had been a paid TA in her home school but was offered a UQT post for the duration of the course, then an NQT post at the end of the course.

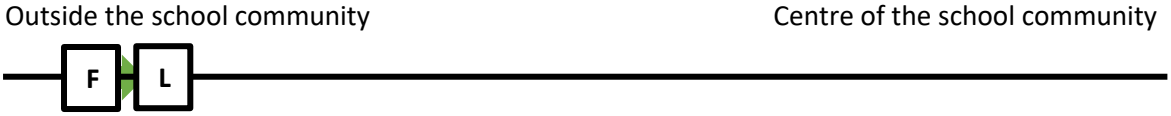


School community:
F = first interview, L = 12 months later, E = End of training

Jake was a paid TA in his home school, became a volunteer TA in the school during the course, and always aimed to teach elsewhere. He began an NQT post in another school at the end of the course. The small arrow on 'L' denotes an arrow Jake drew himself to indicate he felt he was in the process of leaving the school community and presented this positively as a stage towards achieving his goal of QTS.

Laura was a paid TA in her home school and hoped to work in her home school. She was offered a UQT post in another school to commence in the final term of the course and this would become an NQT post at the end of the course.

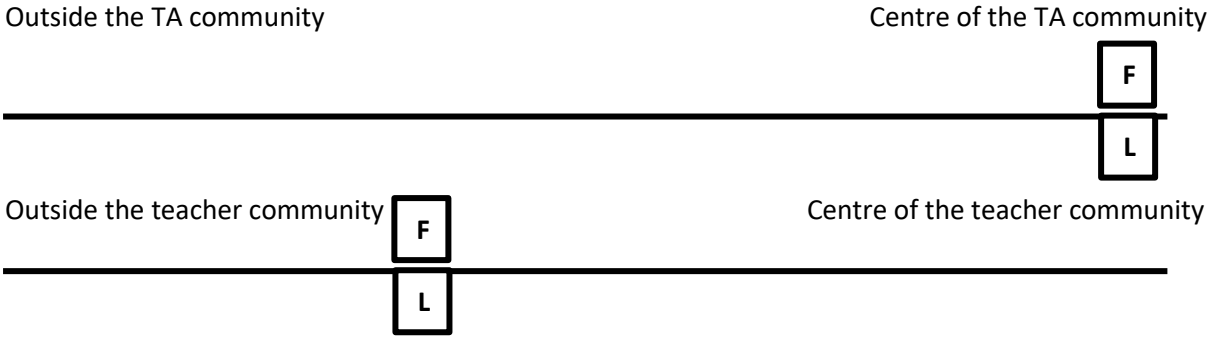
Louise was a volunteer TA in her home school and positioned herself on the out edge of the school community circle. She withdrew from QTS before the end of the course.



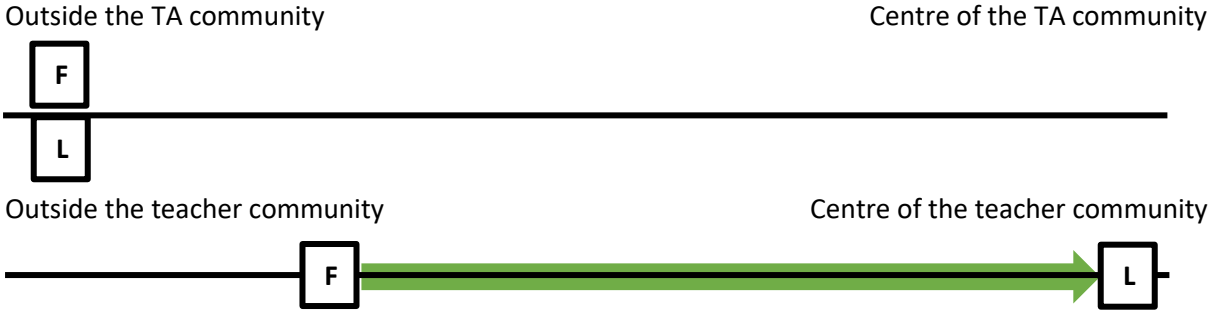
TA community / Teacher community:
F = first interview, L = 12 months later

Jayne did not draw herself in either the TA or the teacher communities at the start of the training. She put herself right in the centre of both 12 months later.

Nicole drew herself the same distance from the centre both times this data was collected in both the TA community and the teacher community.

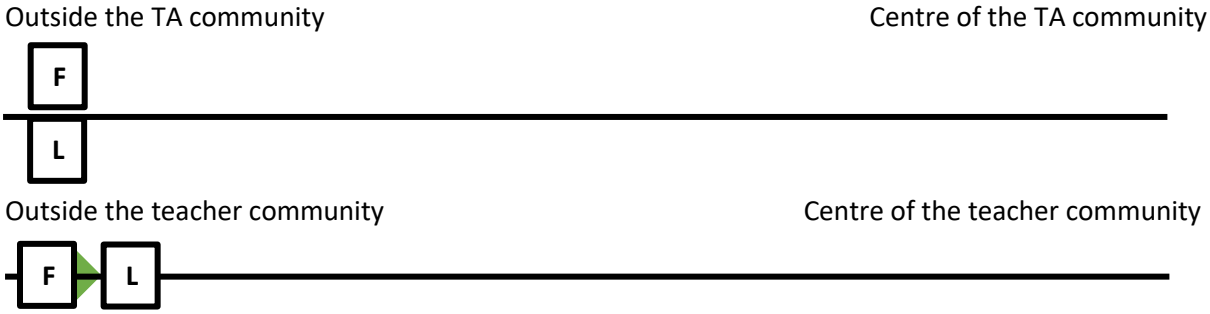


Katie drew herself as outside the TA community in both the first interview and 12 months later.



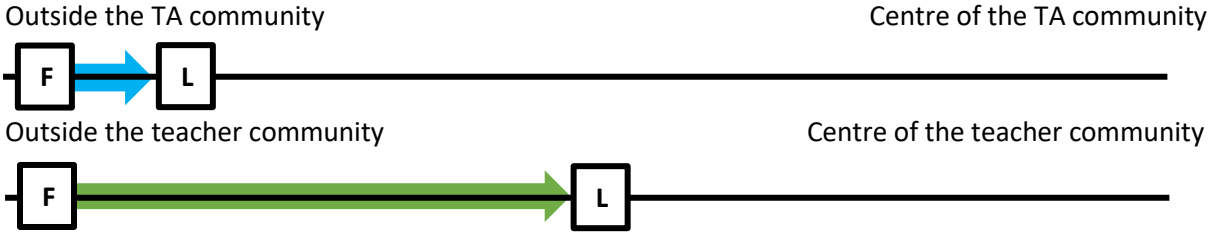
TA community / Teacher community
F = first interview, L = 12 months later

Jake drew himself as outside the TA community in both the first interview and 12 months later. He drew himself outside the teacher community in the first interview but just inside the teacher community 12 months later.



Laura drew herself outside both the teacher and TA communities at the first interview, and then equidistant between the teacher and TA communities in 12 months later.

Louise drew initially drew herself as being outside the edge of both the TA and teacher communities. She drew herself just inside the TA community 12 months later.



APPENDIX 6

Teaching post offered / Teaching post commenced	*1. At the start of the course*	*2. Before introductory placement October 2018*	*3. After introductory placement and just before developing placement Feb/March 2019*	*4. June 2019 After Developing placement before the summer break. June 2019*	*5. During Extending placement Nov 2019*
What are you now? LE	'In limbo'	Trainee teacher	Student teacher.	Trainee teacher	'I am a teacher, I am a teacher!'
What do others see you as? LE	Not discussed	'unsure'	Student	Not discussed	Teacher
What are you now? AF	TA	Trainee teacher (hesitant)	'I'd still say teaching assistant, not trainee teacher'	'More like a teacher'	Teacher
What do others see you as? AF	TA	TA (definite)	'trainee teacher, but then day to day I am still a teaching assistant'	Cover teacher	Teacher
What are you now? KJ	TA	'A new teacher'	'A teacher!'	Teacher	Teacher
What do others see you as? KJ	TA	Not discussed	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher
What are you now? JF	TA	'It's complicated, jack of all trades'	Trainee teacher.	'Almost a teacher'	Teacher
What do others see you as? JF	TA	'Depends who as to whether TA / Trainee teacher'	TA/trainee	Cover teacher / TA	Teacher
What are you now? WM	Not discussed	Teacher*	Somewhere in between teacher and TA.	'Leaning more towards a teacher, but still a balance'	Teacher
What do others see you as? WM	Not discussed	'Cover teacher'	Flexible cover teacher (Home school) 'One of the teachers' (Intro school)	'beginning to pick up some teaching'	Teacher

APPENDIX 7

K – participant initial, 3 – third interview, 43 – page number of K's complete transcript document of all 5 interviews. Line numbers shown for highlighted lines.

Code:
JE – Joint Enterprise
SR – Shared Repertoire
ME – Mutual Engagement
I – Identity
TA – TA role
M/S – Mentoring/support

K.3.43

Right so where are we up to? How are you feeling now?

K.3.43.2 – JE
K.3.43.2-3 – SR

I feel okay. It is just work at school is so full on. There's lots of changes for everybody regardless of whether we are qualified or not or experienced or not, so it just seems as though my head is .... all of the time.

So if you were calling yourself something now what would you be calling yourself?

K.3.43.6 – I

A teacher!

Firmly the teacher?

K.3.43.8-9 – I

Yes, because I do everything - I do all the reports, I've just done parents evenings this week. I don't do anything different.

You said there are lots of changes going on at school?

K.3.43.10 – JE
K.3.43.10-11 – I
K.3.43.11-13 – ME

So we have a PDM, a meeting every Monday, and every Monday I come out and think, 'oh my goodness!'. Every week that's what I do. But so does everybody else. But I come out and go... 'well they changed their mind from last week,'. They are trying to… we are in special measures to requires improvement. The school is doing really well, we are just pushing for this consistency… and teaching… they are trying different ways but it is meaning that we might do something, and then we have to change it then we have to do a different way.

So you can kind of see why it is happening but at the same time that doesn't make it much…

K.3.43

K.3.44.1-2 - JE
K.3.44.2 - ME
K.3.44.3 - SR
K.3.44.3-12 – ME (+ JE)

No. So still at the minute though, they will give you something else to do, but nothing has been taken away. So it just feels like we have more to do. So one of the things is planning. We are three form cohort and I think the advantages of that are you talk to each other, and you share planning and share ideas and the deputy, she is always, since she has been there the last 2 1/2 years, she doesn't like people sharing planning. She thinks that everybody should do their own planning. She thinks it is for originality, to make sure everybody is pulling their weight, you don't just bring up the planning and to teach from it and you haven't researched it, I get that, but everybody has to do their own. You might be aiming for the same thing! We're [all] doing a character description, but how do you get there, you should be planning just yourself.

That is really interesting because of the range of different approaches I hear about - some places are insisting that everything down to the minute is exactly the same in a three-form cohort.

K.3.44.16 - ME
K.3.44.16-17 - JE
K.3.44.18 - SR
K.3.44.18-21 – ME

K.3.44.24-26 ME (+ M/S)
K.3.44.27 - I

Extremely weird. Because even when we were sharing I think being like that she would have been, 'how can that possibly be that you are all...' Because we do this thing as well called 'Deliberate Practice'. So what is right for one class, even if you are teaching the same thing, the way you deliver it, might not be right for the next class. So yes, talk about total opposites! And in the meeting she said, 'so we are going to trial this. Anybody have a problem with that?' and I went, '[*worried groan noise*]', and me and this other student who is unqualified, I think she is doing the assessment route, and she said, 'I will help you,'. But it is time. I said… 'suddenly you want me to do maths and topic and guided reading and literacy and I am at uni?'. It is time. So she spent some time with me. I did it all. I did it. And I have been delivering it this week.

APPENDIX 8
From Wenger, 1998 p. 72-85

Joint Enterprise –

- Negotiated enterprise (p.73) – collective negotiation keeps the CoP together (p. 77 text), doesn't meant that all members believe/agree the same thing (p. 78) but that they need to find a way to do things together (p. 79)
- Mutual accountability (p.73)
- Interpretations (p.73)
- Rhythms (p.73)
- Local response (p.73) - to all the forces and influences beyond their control (p. 77). CoPs are not 'self-contained entities' but develop in larger contexts (p. 79).
- Common understanding of what matters and what does not (p. 81)
- Use of and contribution to reified aspects of accountability (e.g. policies, rules etc.) (p. 81)

Mutual Engagement –

- Engaged diversity (p. 73)
- Doing things together (p. 73)
- Relationships (p. 73)
- Social complexity (p. 73) – diversity not homogeneity (p. 75)
- Community maintenance (p. 73)
- How dilemmas are responded to (p. 75)
- Exchange of information and opinions – knowing the 'latest gossip' as important as understanding the latest memo (p. 74)
- Direct influence on each other's understanding (p. 75)
- Differences as well as similarities – a unique identity within the community (p. 75)
- Different levels of competence (p. 76)
- Understanding what they do and do not know – 'more important to know how to give and receive help than to know everything yourself' (p. 76)
- Giving and receiving help (p. 76)
- Relationships – sustained engagement which include tensions, disagreements and conflicts (p. 77) and knowing the latest gossip (p. 74)

Shared Repertoire

- Already rehearsed but available for further practice (p. 83)
- Stories (p. 73)
- Actions (p. 73)
- Discourses (p. 73)
- Concepts (p. 73)
- Tools and artefacts (p. 73)
- Styles (p. 73) – ways of doing things
- Historical events (p. 73) – shared history

APPENDIX 9

Tasks here are categorised during the analysis stage – participants did not see these categories.

	WM		KJ		LE		JF		AF		LJ
Tasks	first	last	first	last	first	last	first	last	first	last	only
Teaching tasks											
write lesson plans	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers
plan activities or lessons and prepare teaching materials	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	both	both	teachers
lead classes	teachers	teachers	teachers	both	teachers	teachers	both	teachers	both	both	teachers
support children with SEN	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
support learning activities	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
explain things	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
supervise group activities	both	both	teachers	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
help children who need extra support to complete tasks	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
listen to children read	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
tell stories	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
supervise other staff	both	both	teachers	teachers	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	both	teachers	neither
Assessment tasks											
mark work	both	both	teachers	both	teachers	both	teachers	both	both	both	teachers
prepare children for assessments	both	both	both	both	teachers	teachers	both	both	both	teachers	teachers
carry out assessments	both	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	both	teachers	both	teachers	teachers
write reports	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers
track pupil progress	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers
analyse test data	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers
talk to parents about progress at parent's evenings	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers
Behaviour											
manage class behaviour	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
Wider responsibilities within the school											
look after children who are upset or have had accidents	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
help with outings and sports events	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
run afterschool clubs	both	both	teachers	both	both	both	TAs	both	both	both	both
solve IT problems	TAs	both	both	neither	both	both	both	both	teachers	both	both
act as specialist for particular subjects	TAs	both	teachers	teachers	teachers	teachers	both	both	teachers	teachers	teachers
CPD											
take part in training sessions	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
Administrative tasks											
collect money for trips etc.	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	teachers	both	both	both
mark registers	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
carry out administrative tasks	teachers	teachers	TAs	both	both	teachers	both	both	both	both	both
order equipment	teachers	both	both	teachers	teachers	neither	teachers	teachers	teachers	both	neither
investigate pupil absence	both	neither	teachers	teachers	teachers	neither	neither	both	both	both	neither
Cutting and sticking											
get the classroom ready for lessons	both	both	both	teachers	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
clear away materials and equipment after lessons	both	both	TAs	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
photocopy	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
organise of make teaching resources	both	both	TAs	both	both	both	both	both	both	both	both
Display											
put up displays	both	both	both	TAs	both	both	both	both	TAs	both	both
Other											
make cups of tea	both	both	both	neither	both	both	both	both	both	both	both

APPENDIX 10

In the following vignette, all text in bold are direct quotes or paraphrased ideas from Wenger (1998, p. 72-85).
It aims, through description of events at a fictional, but typical, primary school to illustrate both the TA place within the CoP justifying their existing membership of a school CoP, but also their less central role in comparison to teachers.

A new approach to curriculum planning is being discussed at Willow Tree School; the teaching staff are expected to attend a staff meeting in which they will contribute ideas to the discussion and create the new curriculum planning documentation. It will consider both the content of the curriculum following recent news that Ofsted will be focusing on the 'broad and balanced curriculum', and also how the plans will be used. TAs as is normal practice in the school, are invited to all staff meetings if they choose to attend; they are not paid extra for this additional time in school. None have chosen to attend this week's meeting. TAs will then see the subsequent planning and use it their work.

In terms of **joint enterprise**, the *creation of* the planning documentation is a **negotiated enterprise**; all teachers may not agree with the new approach, but have been involved in the discussion about and creation of the document which contributes to the overall goal of planning a meaningful curriculum for the children. Teachers are **mutually accountable** for the approach that has been taken; have decided **what matters and what does not**, and find a response to the situation that **considers influences beyond their control** (e.g. the National Curriculum, Ofsted's latest inspection framework).

TAs and teachers are **engaged together in the joint enterprise of making** planning **real and liveable.** They are **accountable** for *using* the planning approach – **it is an integral part of their practice**. Various **interpretations** of the content of the planning emerge over the first term it is introduced; in KS1, the staff are aiming to adopt an immersive learning approach with a new theme every 4 weeks that will cross all subjects. In upper KS2, maths and English will continue to be taught independently in the mornings, and then other subjects will be taught using a cross curricular approach in the afternoons and change once every half term both groups of staff have a **local response** – they have interpreted the planning to fit with the **rhythms** that have emerged over time.

Mutual engagement
Teachers **directly influence** TAs **understanding** of the approach being taken. In the staff meeting, they are **mutually engaged** with the creation of the documentation. **Relationships** are tested; the history specialist (an NQT) challenges the idea of a cross curricular approach, worrying that 'her' subject will be watered down resulting in a heated **disagreement** which is only resolved when the geography specialist with a greater **level of competence** experience and explains a compromise that has worked in the past.

TAs and teachers **are included in what matters;** they all **know and understand** the planning approach being taken, and the rationale. TAs and teachers use the plans together (**doing things together**) but use them in different ways (**engaged diversity**). The all interpret their planning process in different ways; there is no expectation of **homogeneity**. In class 3, the teacher and TA have worked together for a number of years and have built a good **relationship** whereby they know each other's strengths. They have decided that the TA will plan for a group of children with SEN with whom the she usually works, whereas the teachers in class 8 and 9 have decided that they will plan together, sharing their TAs between them, **helping** each other to enable their TAs to work with children in both classes that require the same support.
The teachers have shared with the TAs the **gossip** about the disagreement that occurred in the staff meeting.

For both the TAs and the teachers, the new planning approach becomes part of the **shared repertoire** in the school. It is a **tool** that is used, and replaces the old approach to planning which will be referred to as 'how we used to do it' (**historical events**). When new staff join the school, the **style** of planning that Willow Tree School use is explained to them.